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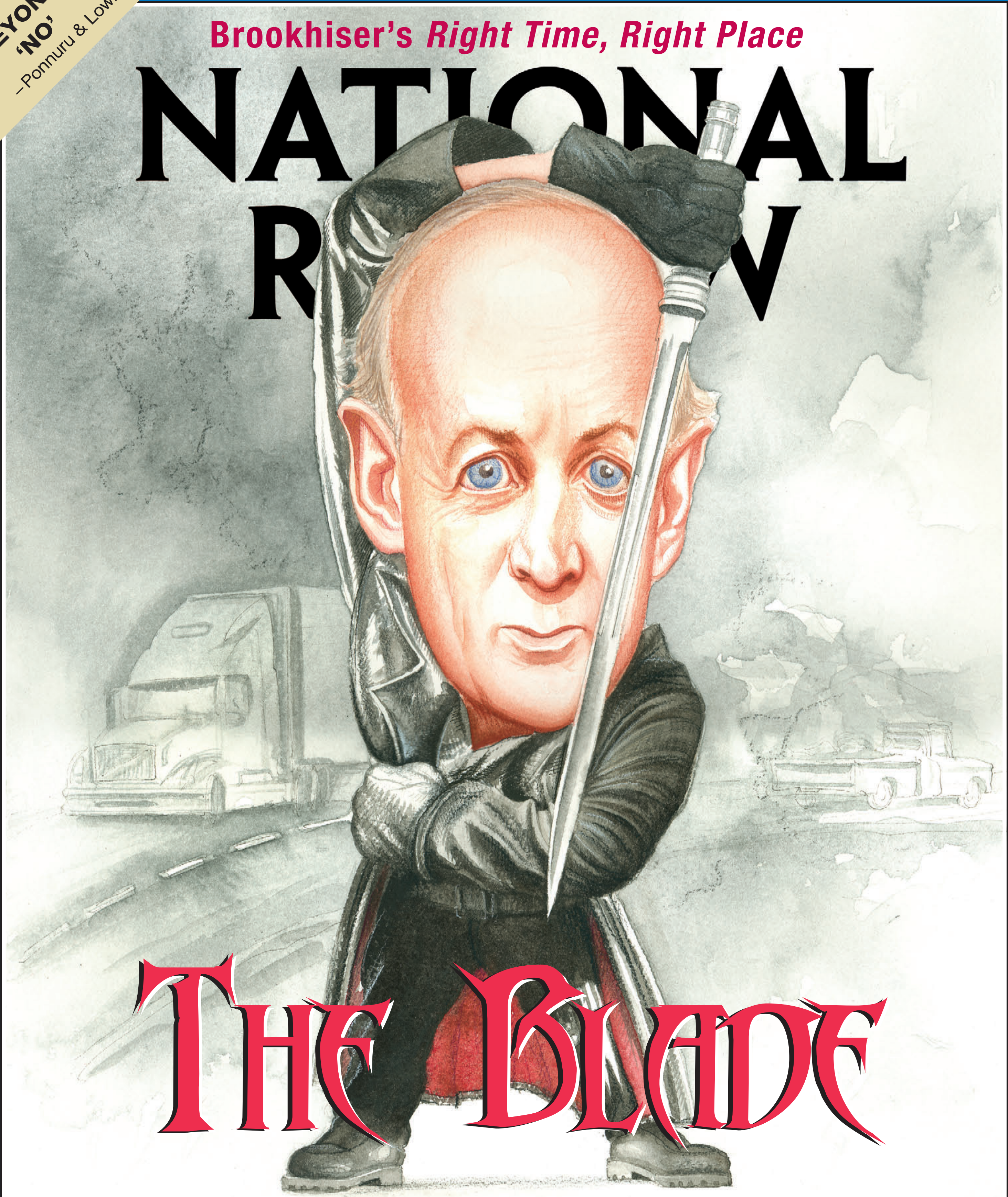

THE BLADE

GOVERNOR MITCH DANIELS

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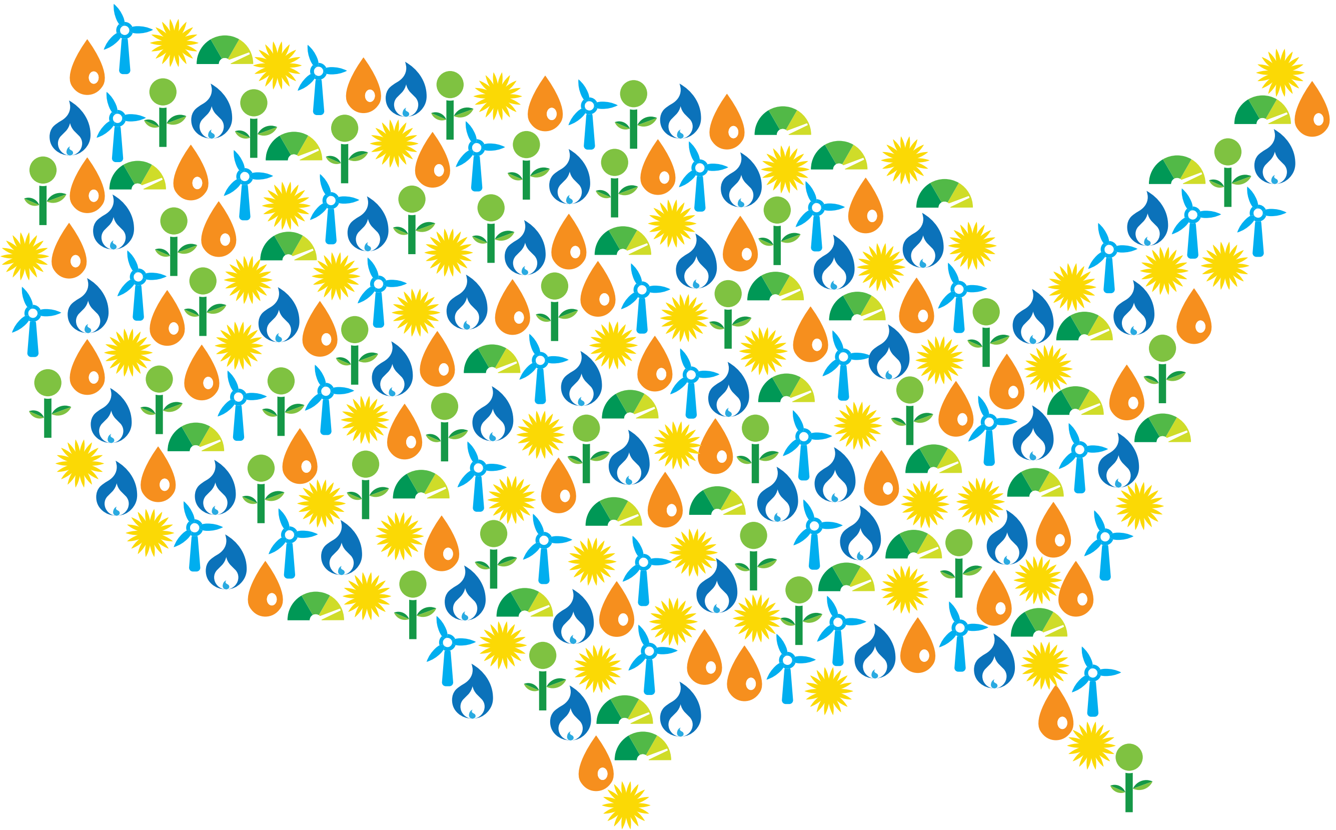

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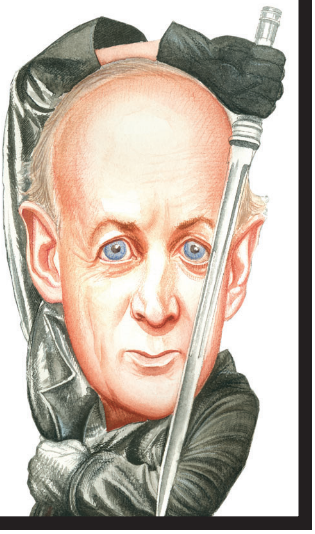

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Letters

For the Birds

In the picture accompanying Richard Brookhiser's most recent column ("Bright Wings," May 25), the bird identified as a phoebe is a phoebe. The bird identified as a crow, however, is not a crow; it's a raven.

They are different birds, and the difference is not small. The raven has rounded outer tail feathers, a heavier beak, and fine feathers extending over the edge of the beak. Crows have squared-off tails and lighter beaks, cleanly delineated.

The article was very pleasant, and Brookhiser is only beginning to glimpse the intelligence, cooperation, and communication exhibited by corvids. Continuing to observe them would provide him with a lot more material for a lot more columns. I could tell him a lot more, but he will have more fun discovering it for himself.

Kristin K. Freeman
Kuna, Idaho

Putting Specter in His Place

I just happened to be thumbing through the April 20, 2009, issue and came upon the note about Arlen Specter in "The Week"—the one on card check that ended, "It's nice to see Specter allying with his own party, even temporarily."

Less than a month later and Arlen's back where he belongs: driving us nuts.

Brad Bettin
Cocoa, Fla.

The King and I

I have always enjoyed the musings of Jay Nordlinger, and "The Hills Are Alive" (May 4) was his musings at their best. As was true of Jay before this year, I have never attended the Masters, but cannot recall having missed one, in all its detail, on the tube.

It is good to know that Nordlinger has spent too much time playing and studying golf, as have too many of us poor mortals. I was duly impressed with his knowledge of the game. For example, he correctly says: "Gary Player . . . was the best bunker player in the world."

But I was disappointed that Nordlinger made no reference to Arnold Palmer. It was Arnie, with his play and persona, who really established the Masters' unequaled prominence. Palmer won the Masters four times (1958, 1960, 1962, and 1964) and narrowly missed a fifth win. He also won the U.S. Open in 1960 and the British Open in 1961 and 1962. The Associated Press named him Athlete of the Decade for the '60s.

I may be biased, though. I dined last night at Arnie's Latrobe Country Club (I've been a member since 1961) and had a nice chat with him. He is hale and hearty. He wished me a happy 97th birthday.

George J. Heideman
Ligonier, Penn.

JAY NORDLINGER REPLIES: I would never forget the King. Wrote about him last summer, in a piece on the reopening of "Golf House," as we used to know it ("A Day of Golf," June 30, 2008). Palmer is the guy who made golf so popular, you could barely get a tee time.

Letters may be submitted by e-mail to letters@nationalreview.com.

9 billion

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The Week

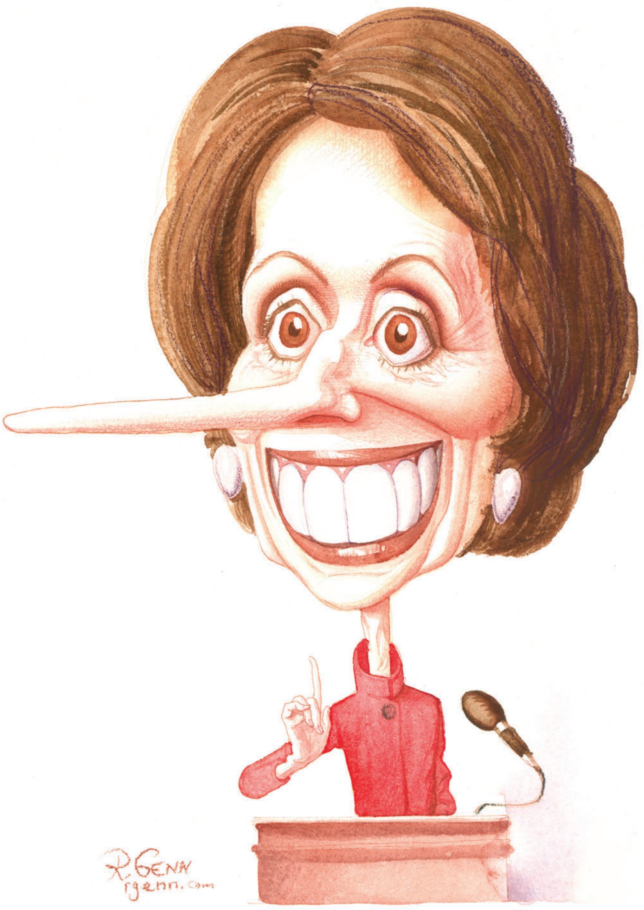
■ *This* vice-president, by nature, cannot be in an undisclosed location.

■ Dick Cheney is the madwoman in the attic, the crazy voice that Republicans ought to stifle. So says the press, and indeed he must seem mad to them: He doesn't think waterboarding was torture—he thinks it yielded essential information from top al-Qaeda captives, and he wants to publicize CIA documents that he believes would make his case. Cheney's argument does not concern the direction of the Republican party: He has reached the end of his career. He is defending the Bush administration against the smears of its enemies, including its successors. No one in the press, outside Rightworld, will push back, and no one else from the Bush administration, it seems, wants to. Cheney is performing a lonely and necessary function. Bring it on.

■ The word "liar" is thrown around too much in our politics, but it is difficult to conclude that the term does not fit Nancy Pelosi. Pelosi took an aggressive line on national-security questions after 9/11 but followed her party in reversing course when the Iraq War grew unpopular. She eventually came to denounce American intelligence efforts as torture, and now protests that she did not know that al-Qaeda captives were being waterboarded. CIA records show that Pelosi was briefed on interrogation techniques in September 2002. There is no record of her having protested then what she now calls "torture." Others present at Pelosi's briefing confirm that the CIA made it clear what techniques were being used. Pelosi first explained that she had been told the CIA considered waterboarding legal but not that it had been used. She then claimed that the CIA had denied using waterboarding—that it had deliberately misled her. The current CIA chief, Leon Panetta, a Democrat and former congressional colleague of Pelosi, indignantly dismisses the speaker's charge. Pelosi claims to want the CIA's records of the briefings made public. The agency should oblige her.

■ President Obama gave the commencement speech, and accepted an honorary degree, at Notre Dame. The university flouted the Catholic bishops' instruction that Catholic schools should not honor officials who deny justice to the unborn. Its president, the Rev. John Jenkins, maintained that the university remains committed to the pro-life cause, not that he spent a nanosecond of the big day making the case for life. Obama, for his part, used the occasion to continue to reach out to Catholics, including those who disagree with him on abortion. He has long recognized that his party's support for an unlimited abortion license is a political liability, and worked to reduce that liability without reducing that support. At Notre Dame Obama's tack was to call for civility, open-mindedness, and tolerance. He was smart enough not to add: Live and let live.

ROMAN GENN



■ Over the last 15 years, pollsters have found that the number of Americans who consider themselves "pro-life" rather than "pro-choice" has been slowly increasing. The spread of sonogram technology, the attention to partial-birth abortion, and the decline of anti-abortion violence all appear to have contributed to this shift. Now pollsters are finding a sudden additional increase in the number of pro-lifers. Gallup finds that 51 percent of Americans apply that label to themselves, while Fox News finds a 49–43 split in pro-lifers' favor. (Fox also finds that 51 percent of independent voters consider themselves pro-life.) Our best guess is that people who are ambivalent about abortion are more likely to count themselves as pro-life when the other side holds as much power as they do now. These numbers ought to be a warning sign to the Obama administration—and to those Republicans who fantasize that they will recover as soon as they ditch the social issues.

■ Since Barack Obama did not have much time to learn before becoming president, he must of necessity learn on the job. On the advice of Defense Secretary Robert Gates, he is taking legal action to block the release of photos of prisoner abuse by American soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, reversing an earlier

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decision to go along with lower-court rulings that favored exposure. Releasing the pictures, Obama now says, would "further inflame anti-American opinion" and "put our troops in greater danger." Jihadists would use the pictures to energize mobs and recruits, and defeatists at home would use them to make the case that America is incapable of defending itself honorably, and should not try. We salute the new realism, and hope it is more than a passing mood.

■ It is becoming a Friday ritual—the weekly announcement of the embarrassing news that yet another Bush national-security policy labeled a war crime or a rule-of-law violation by the Obama campaign has been adopted by the Obama administration. Thus did the president announce that military commissions aren't so bad after all. The administration will be resuming them for, at least, the worst al-Qaeda detainees, such as Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. Such dramatic reversals are routinely accompanied by face-saving claims that the Bush policy is being adopted only after an "overhaul" that renders it consistent with "our values." But the "overhaul" turns out to be an inconsequential tweak or two. (On the military commissions, for example, detainees who have enjoyed their pick among legions of volunteer lawyers from white-shoe firms will now somehow have "more latitude" in choosing counsel.) The commissions join a growing list of Bush policies—military detention, rendition, aggressive surveillance, state-secrets-doctrine assertions, withholding of classified information (such as prisoner-abuse photos), the operation of Guantanamo Bay, etc.—that Obama has continued notwithstanding his MoveOn election rhetoric. "Our values" are turning out to be rather protean.

McCHRYSTAL

HELENE C. STIKKEL/DOD

■ President Obama cashiered his commanding general in Afghanistan, a stunning move and welcome break from the excessive deference President Bush showed his generals until near the end of his presidency. By all accounts, the departing general, David McKiernan, is a good man who was just not creative enough in applying the principles of counterinsurgency to the circumstances of Afghanistan. His replacement is Lt. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, a brilliant confidant of CENTCOM chief David Petraeus. We now have assembled a top-notch military and diplomatic team in Afghanistan, which will require every ounce of its talent.

■ Wanda Sykes, yukking it up at the White House Correspondents' Dinner, said that Rush Limbaugh's kidneys should fail, and that he needed "a little waterboarding." President Obama, sitting to her right, squeezed out a laugh. As a man, he should be given the benefit of the doubt: We all laugh at things we know we should not; queasiness can express itself as laughter. As president, he must surrender that benefit: The rules of the job are that every moment, outside the bedroom and the bathroom, is lived in public view. (In eight years, President Washington laughed in public only once—at a joke at his own expense.) In the meantime, can we put the White House Correspondents' Dinner out of its misery? Yes, NR goes year after year, because everyone else does—but what a concatenation of self-love, fawning, and ogling the occasion is. In future ages, it will join bear-baiting and royal levees among the unseemly rites of the past.

■ Next year's Senate elections won't be easy for Republicans. Already battered by the two previous cycles, they have retirements in Missouri, New Hampshire, and Ohio, and vulnerable incumbents in Kentucky, Louisiana, and North Carolina. So it makes sense that the National Republican Senatorial Committee, led by Texas senator John Cornyn, would want to secure Florida, a competitive state for both parties, as early as possible. When Gov. Charlie Crist announced that he would try to succeed retiring senator Mel Martinez, the NRSC wasted no time in issuing its endorsement. In doing so, however, it backed a liberal Republican over a viable, conservative alternative: Marco Rubio, the former speaker of Florida's house of representatives, who is also in the race. The NRSC's argument is that nobody can beat Crist. If so, he hardly needs the NRSC's support 15 months before the primary. Sometimes the GOP must recruit moderates in order to win, especially in a state such as Delaware, where Rep. Mike Castle—who has not declared his Senate candidacy—is probably the only Republican capable of capturing the seat recently occupied by Vice President Biden. Florida is another matter. Conservatives can win there. Rather than try to clear the field of promising young talents such as Rubio, the NRSC should devote its resources to defeating Democrats.

■ Michael Steele, chairman of the Republican National Committee, has opposed a resolution, scheduled for a vote by RNC members as we went to press, that calls on the Democrats to rename themselves the Democrat Socialist Party. Steele told David Gregory on *Meet the Press*: "I've been very clear that I don't think that that is an appropriate way to express our views on the issues of the day." We agree. While conservatives are right to point to the similarities between the Democratic program and European social democracy, this resolution is quite literally name-calling—the kind of unforced error that Republicans and conservatives must avoid if they want to focus the public's attention on what's really important.

■ Utah governor Jon Huntsman, a Republican, will be Obama's ambassador to China. He is a good choice: a capable politician who speaks Mandarin fluently and has diplomatic experience. His appointment set off a flurry of commentary to the effect that Obama had taken the great moderate hope for the Republican party off the board for 2012. Huntsman was in fact always a long shot for 2012, especially given the likely presence of fellow Mormon Mitt Romney in the presidential race. Huntsman has signed bills cutting taxes, regulating abortion, and expanding school choice. Should he ever get the Republican nomination, we suspect that many of his current fans would start saying that he wants to bankrupt the government, throw women in jail, and end public education.

■ The magic wand the White House plans on using to control health-care costs is showing signs of malfunction. Soon after President Obama announced an agreement with health-industry groups to reduce the growth of costs by a whopping $2 trillion,

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the groups denied his claims and distanced themselves from his ambitions. In a triumphal White House statement, accompanied by charts and graphs and the usual wonkish accoutrements, Obama said the associations of hospitals, insurers, and doctors had pledged to reduce the rate of growth of health-care costs (which is just over 6 percent per year now) by an astounding 1.5 percent each year for the next ten years. After a couple of days of frantic phone calls from their members, who were wondering how exactly they were expected to do that, the American Hospital Association released a statement saying Obama had misrepresented the agreement: The groups had not pledged to reduce the growth of health-care costs by 1.5 percent each year, but by a total of 1.5 percent over ten years—which would come nowhere near the savings Obama claimed. Moreover, the association clarified, "the A.H.A. did not commit to support the Obama health plan." That's good news, since the plan seems to be built on illusions.

■ Democratic representative Henry Waxman, chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, unveiled a bill that would create a cap-and-trade program for carbon emissions and require utility companies to generate 20 percent of their energy from renewable sources. These sources (the greens' holy trinity of wind, solar, and biofuels) cannot compete commercially with fossil fuels, nor is there a commercially viable way to burn fossil fuels without emitting carbon dioxide. The goal of the bill is quite plainly to reduce the use of our cheapest and most abundant energy source by increasing its cost (for more on how

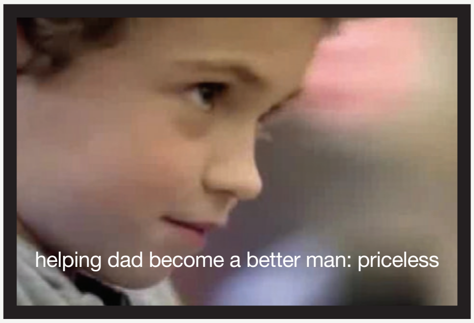
The Littlest Totalitarian

'HELPING Dad become a better man: priceless."

That's the closing line of a new MasterCard commercial. You know those commercials; they've been out for nearly a decade. A typical one goes something like this: "Bric-a-brac: 17 dollars. White elephant: 28 dollars. Getting your wife to remove the restraining order: priceless."

Only this one has a little boy tailing his father—a man who looks like a perpetually adolescent extra from the old sitcom *Friends*—through a home-improvement store pointing out ways the carbon-profligate old man can reduce his footprint. The boy replaces the usual narrator as well.

"Energy-saving bulb: four dollars," quoth the child. "Reusable bag: two dollars. Helping Dad become a better man: priceless."


helping dad become a better man: priceless

There are two kinds of folks in this world: those who find this sort of thing creepy, and pod people. Okay, maybe that's a bit too strong. But how anyone could fail to find this commercial one of the more disturbing convergences of corporate power, advertising, and progressive groupthink is beyond me.

If you can't see why, maybe it will help to look a few spaces ahead of where we are. In Britain, an electric utility launched a website for kids that teaches them how to become "climate cops." Their duty is to keep a "watchful eye" and monitor the "energy crimes" of their family and neighbors, with the ultimate goal of building a "climate-crime case file." Beware that Johnson kid with the clipboard going through your recyclables.

If you still can't see why this kiddie Gestapo stuff is offensive, change the issue from environmentalism to eating habits (you know that's coming, by the way), or religion, or just about any subject where you don't think a six-year-old should be scolding you for weakness of character or informing on you to the authorities.

Now, it's not that I think kids shouldn't be encouraged to be civic-minded. And while I find today's climate obsessions to be suffused with religious hysteria, I don't see anything terrible in encouraging kids, or anyone else, to conserve resources. But that's not the issue here. Nor is environmentalism per se.

It's the kids.

There is something evil about recruiting children to lobby their parents on political causes. Okay, it's not always evil; sometimes it can be funny, like the time in 1965 when Soupy Sales told the children watching his TV show to sneak into their parents' bedrooms and take the "green pieces of paper" from their wallets and send them to him.

Sales apologized for cracking a joke that a few kids took seriously. But no apologies are forthcoming from MasterCard for broadcasting something in earnest that in a healthy society would be seen as a joke. The idea of enlisting children to the Cause is as fashionable today as it was under Robespierre. To crack the bunker walls of the family and seduce the children has always been a top priority of totalitarians, hard and soft. Progressives love to elevate the sagacity of children—Hillary Clinton says some of the best theologians she's ever met have been five-year-olds—because doing so gives children all the more authority when they parrot the talking points of the latest progressive fad.

James Lileks asks about the MasterCard ad: "If the kid didn't learn these steps to righteousness at home, where did he get them?" Precisely. It's not as if normal, uncoached six-year-olds talk about making their fathers "better men."

If the man in the ad were a better father, he would have scolded his kid for the disrespect and demanded to know who was teaching him such crap.

—JONAH GOLDBERG

The Truth About Paris After Midnight

Parisian culture for only $195 and you get $200 in gift coupons. Tres Magnifique!

I probably shouldn't tell this story, but that's never stopped me before. Curiosity got the best of me during a recent stop in Paris and I found myself strolling through Montmarte toward the Moulin Rouge. Yes, *that* Moulin Rouge. The same cabaret that was famous a hundred years ago for its showgirls and outrageous entertainment. I'd always wanted to see the Can-Can up close, so I headed for the big red windmill.

The show was racy enough to cause a blush or two, but I survived. Then a photo on the wall caught my eye. It was dancer Josephine Baker, drizzled in pearls from head to toe. The inspiration hit me on the walk down the Champs- Elysees.

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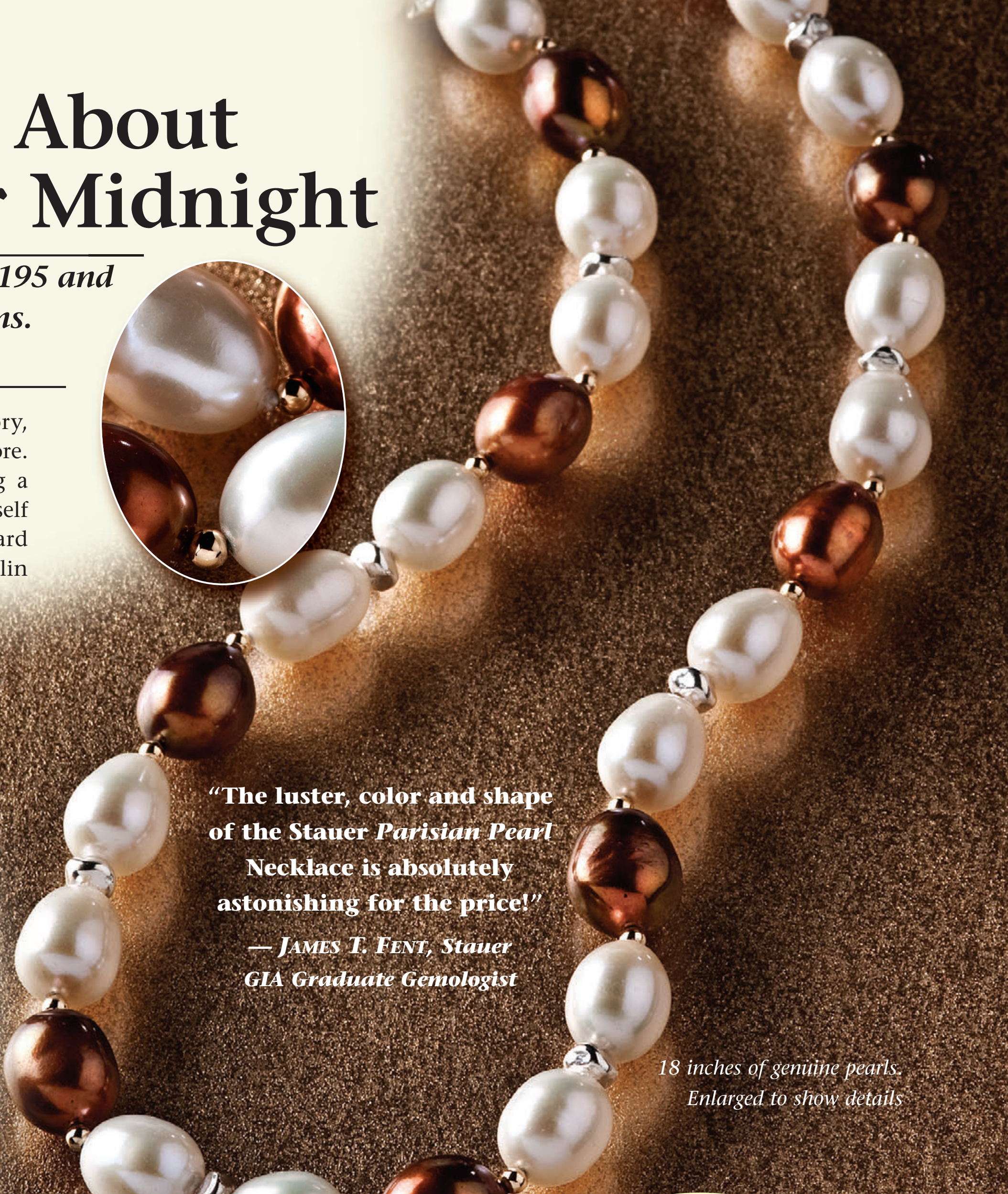

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that would happen, you may read Jim Manzi on page 36). If it were in effect today, our recession would be much worse. If it passes, our next one will be.

■ The auto bailout keeps getting weirder: General Motors announced plans to sell itself to the government. The government will forgive the $15.4 billion in "emergency loans" GM has already received, and the new company will be offered a fresh line of credit. Meanwhile, a proposed partnership between bankrupt automaker Chrysler and the Italian company Fiat might also include the GM-owned Opel. GM is looking for someone to buy the struggling German subsidiary (presumably the U.S. government isn't interested), and the German government is reportedly offering to subsidize the sale. Government Motors vs. Fiat-Opel-Chrysler: a new epic rivalry begins.

■ California, its budget a sinkhole, has proposed the most modest of trims—$74 million from a program that subsidizes the wages of (unionized, of course) health-care workers who tend the sick in their homes. The Obama administration has responded in characteristically masterful fashion, threatening to withhold 92 times that amount, or $6.8 billion, in federal stimulus funds. Which is to say, every dollar's worth of self-imposed fiscal responsibility will buy Californians nearly a C-note in punishment from Obama. Why? The home-health workers in question are Service Employees International Union members, who flooded the Obama campaign with money, manpower, and votes. California currently kicks in $12.10 an hour to boost their wages (that's only part of their pay) and proposes to reduce its contribution to $10.10 an hour. As George Will points out, SEIU gathers $5 million a month from the union dues paid by these employees, some of which is sure to end up in Obama's campaign coffers. If California cannot reform its spending, it will be a federal dependency forever. Which may be Obama's plan.

If California cannot reform its spending, it will be a federal dependency forever. Which may be Obama's plan.

■ Gil Kerlikowske, the new drug czar, suggests abandoning the phrase "war on drugs." "Regardless of how you try to explain to people it's a 'war on drugs,'" he said in his first interview on the job, they "see a war as a war on them. We're not at war with people in this country." Kerlikowske's statement concerns rhetoric, which has been both an obsession and a distraction to this administration. But rhetoric also has consequences. We have waged a war on drugs for decades, at great cost and to slight effect. NATIONAL REVIEW concluded, more than a decade ago, that "the war on drugs is lost" (Feb. 12, 1996). If the political classes are truly willing to think new thoughts, they have a lot to consider: programs for treatment; choices between legalization, decriminalization, and controlled supply; ways to fight black marketeers. We have put the moment off many, many years. Better late than never.

■ The Obama administration has announced that it intends to step up antitrust prosecutions, and the likely targets of opportunity are situated in Silicon Valley. This has the sweet savor of poetic justice, inasmuch as executives from Google and such were slavish in their support of Obama's candidacy. But it's also a setback for America: Antitrust enforcement has done very little for the American consumer, and very much to erode the competitiveness of American enterprise; today, it threatens to stifle innovation. Consider the case of Microsoft, which spent years and millions fending off an antitrust action launched against it because of its web-browser business at a time when the firm did not even enjoy a majority market share, much less a monopoly. Most of that case was dismissed, but the damage was substantial. As antitrust expert Dominick T. Armentano of the Independent Institute has argued, what American consumers need from the government is not better protection from monopoly, which is rare, but better protection from fraud, which is common. The feds should worry more about Bernie Madoff and Norman Hsu, and let Google and Yahoo duke it out in the marketplace.

■ One of Obama's few genuine non-defense budget cuts is a sharp reduction in funding for the agency that polices "embezzlement from labor organizations, extortionate picketing, deprivation of union members' rights by force or violence, and fraud in union officer elections." During the Bush administration, the agency's budget increased by 50 percent, and it chalked up 929 convictions of corrupt union officials. Yet Obama's Labor Department appointees say it does not have a big enough workload, so 9 percent of its $45 million budget should go to other agencies. A primary beneficiary will be the bureaucracy that makes sure "that contractors doing business with the Federal government do not discriminate and take affirmative action." In the Age of Obama, quota enforcers are showered with money, while investigators of fraud, embezzlement, and strong-arming have to beg for spare change. It goes to show, yet again, that the interests of "labor" and the interests of workers are often antithetical.

■ It is a good general rule that any congressional bill named after some victim of a crime or misfortune is a bad bill. The Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Prevention Act, which has just been introduced on the floor of the U.S. Senate, is worse than most. It represents a triumph of politics over law, giving the federal government the power to appease powerful voting blocs by violating the ancient Anglo-Saxon legal antipathy to double jeopardy, an antipathy enshrined in the Fifth Amendment to our Constitution. A person goes to trial in state court on some charge that causes offense to some powerful voting bloc. He is acquitted by a jury of his peers. The powerful voting bloc is mad as hell and makes a fuss, so the feds step in to rearrest and retry the accused. Federal civil-rights laws are all too frequently used in this way—recall the case of the Rodney King police officers. If this bill becomes law, the feds will have another weapon in their armory with which to enforce double jeopardy against crimes they particularly dislike.

■ President Obama and Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu came out of their White House meeting smiling and paying the usual compliments to each other—there was even lip service about a supposed "historic opportunity." In spite of the hopes of some and the fears of others, the predicted clash did not materialize. For both men, the primary concern remains Iran's efforts at deceptively developing a nuclear weapon that will endanger the regional and international orders. The unclenched hand that Obama has proffered to Iran runs the risk of ending in rebuff and humiliation, but he reassured Netanyahu that in the absence of any concessions from the mullahs his patience will be exhausted by the end of the year. That's a timetable of sorts. Most Arab states are as alarmed as Israel by Iran's open imperialism, and, to get them on board, Obama used this occasion to boost the fabled "two-state solution" whereby Palestinians and Israelis are to live amicably side by side. Since the Palestinians are ideologically split between secular nationalists and Islamists, they are more prone to wage civil war than to form a state. The "peace process" is descending into meaninglessness.

■ Obama met with the presidents of Pakistan and Afghanistan, whose security problems are conjoined. The Taliban is at root a Pakistani phenomenon, one that was encouraged by that country's military and intelligence establishment, but our ability to directly influence events in Islamabad is limited. The Pakistani president, Asif Ali Zardari, is a weak leader whose venality guides his sympathies toward the West. He nonetheless has been too accommodating of the Taliban during his short time in power, hoping until recently that they would more or less behave themselves in exchange for a greater degree of autonomy. That policy was an extension of the false hope of Pervez Musharraf, his predecessor, who took a similar line. So what can the United States do? The goal of our policy should be to change Islamabad's perception of its interest, chiefly through a sustained display of power and resolve in Afghanistan. This would make it clear that the U.S. is and will continue to be the guarantor of the regional security order, and that Pakistan must calculate accordingly. The people of Pakistan do not, on the whole, care for Islamism; Pakistani civil society has some healthy elements; Pakistani economic interests lie in political openness and trade, via Afghanistan, with Central Asia. It is not outlandish to hope that these currents, over time, will wash the Taliban into a much-deserved oblivion. Until then, we can do little more than show our strength and reward those who trust in it.

■ In the bloodstained history of terrorism, the Tamil Tigers will always have a place, alongside the IRA, the Taliban, the Chechens, and the PLO. They were the originators of suicide bombing by women as well as men, assassinating leading personalities in their native Sri Lanka and in India, and they conscripted child soldiers. To outsiders, the movement's leader, Vellupillai Prabhakaran, seemed unmilitary, even uncharismatic, but for over a quarter of a century he brutalized and shattered Sri Lanka, turning the grievances of the Hindu Tamil minority into a cause against the Buddhist Sinhalese majority. Religion, nationalism, and ethnicity fused into diehard fanaticism. At moments, Prabhakaran controlled swathes of territory like the warlord he was. In savage fighting, amid massacres and reprisals, at least 70,000 people were killed, and over 200,000 became refugees. The Sinhalese president, Mahinda Rajapaksa, finally struck a deal whereby China was to arm his people with modern weaponry and aircraft, in return acquiring a harbor in Sri Lanka and so enlarging their presence in Asia. The Sri Lankan army gradually drove the Tigers into a killing ground, and claim to have identified the corpses of Prabhakaran and his colleagues. Fighting is over. A terrorist campaign has been defeated, and that too will enter the history books.

■ Day after day, week after week, the lights go out in Venezuela. A recent headline read, "Last anti-Chávez TV station faces probe, shutdown." At the Summit of the Americas, President Obama called Hugo Chávez his friend ("mi amigo"). Chávez is not the friend of any democrat. We should not let the dying of the light in Venezuela go unnoticed.

■ Manmohan Singh and his ruling Congress party expanded their margin in India's latest parliamentary elections, which means that the reform-minded economist should be able to liberate himself from the worst of the far-left coalition partners with which political necessity had saddled his government. During his time as India's finance minister, Singh began giving India's economy small injections of capitalism, and he has continued that work as prime minister. Many millions of Indians are freer and less poor because of those policies, and few politicians can boast of having done as much measurable good for their people. One of Pres. George W. Bush's great unsung successes was refreshing U.S. relations with India, a natural ally on trade, democracy, and containing Islamist violence. Lamentably, India's reformers have found little encouragement in the administration of Barack Obama, whose only notable public pronouncement on India so far has been to accuse Bangalore of stealing jobs from Buffalo. Obama might pause ever so briefly from gladhanding South American autocrats to attend to an ally that shares our values and our interests.

MUSTAFA QURAISHI/AP

■ For four months, Roxana Saberi, an Iranian American with dual citizenship, was held in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison. She was accused, absurdly, of spying for the United States. That is always the accusation of such regimes. Saberi was, in effect, a hostage. On May 11, she was released—without explanation. The public does not know how that release was effected, or why it occurred. But the good news is: the release. There are a few more Americans in Iran still waiting for that result.

■ Masaharu Nakagawa, the financial-affairs spokesman for Japan's opposition Democratic party, elevated eyebrows by suggesting that Japan cease buying U.S. Treasury obligations unless they are "samurai bonds"—meaning those denominated in yen instead of dollars. Unlike more than a few of his U.S. counterparts, Mr. Nakagawa evinces an admirable command of arithmetic, and therefore fears the inflationary effects of the trillions of fresh dollars that are being unleashed into the economy through bank bailouts, stimulus largesse, and President Obama's lordly ambitions. Inflation is the most convenient way for government debtors to rook those who lend to them, and Mr. Nakagawa does not wish to see the Bank of Japan left holding a bag of rapidly depreciating dollars. China, too, grows anxious that the greenbacks it holds soon may be worth much less than they are now. Predicting short-term fluctuations in currency-exchange rates is a tricky business—ask George Soros—but it is clear that Tokyo and Beijing are taking the long view and not much liking what they see. If Washington does not discipline its borrowing and spending, bond investors surely will do it for them, and the market will accomplish what politics has not.

■ Nicholas Winton is a name that ought to be better known. He has been called the British Schindler. As the Nazis were dismembering Czechoslovakia and preparing for mass persecutions, he went to Prague and set up an office there. At the time, he was 29 and a stockbroker's clerk, nobody special. It was a feat to organize eight trains that brought Jewish children to London—they all needed sponsors, complex paperwork, and funding. In all, Winton saved 667 children, though sometimes the figure is given as 669. The ninth train was due to leave on September 3, 1939, the day war was declared, so it was canceled. The 250 children who would have been on that train were soon murdered. There's been some recognition. Books have been written about him, and films made. The Queen knighted him and the Czechs proposed him for the Nobel Peace Prize. Winton makes no claims for himself, merely saying, "I just saw what was going on and did what I could to help." This admirable and modest man has just celebrated his 100th birthday.

■ One of the most aggravating features of Communist life is the loudspeakers: the broadcasting of propaganda over loudspeakers in the streets. People from Communist countries all over the world have complained about this. This propaganda is ear-splitting and soul-bruising. In Vietnam, they blast the propaganda at dawn and at dusk, for 30 minutes a stretch. And a local official in Hanoi is proposing to do something about this: He has suggested that the government put the information—the propaganda—on the Internet. People should be allowed to "choose to listen rather than be forced to listen," he says. To choose rather than to be forced: Were that principle to take hold, your country would cease to be Communist.

■ Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi is going through an ugly divorce from his wife of 29 years. Signora Berlusconi claims to have suffered countless umilliazioni at the hands of her husband. The last straw was the prime minister's doting attendance at the birthday party of 18-year-old lingerie model Noemi Letizia, to whom he gave a gold necklace and a diamond-studded pendant. Berlusconi had failed to attend his own children's 18th-birthday parties, his wife complained. She further opined: "I can't go on being with a man who consorts with minors. . . . He is not well." While we have nothing but respect for the wronged lady and her opinions, it would seem from external evidence that Signore Berlusconi, at 72, is in robust good health.

■ Among the 31 colleges of Cambridge University in England are three that admit only women. The oldest of the three is Newnham College, founded in 1871. In accordance with the ancient traditions of the university, Newnham students hear a Latin grace spoken before their college meals. The traditional grace offered thanks to *Jesum Christum dominum nostrum*. This has now been ruled too religious by the bluestockings of Newnham. A new grace has been established, declaring (in Latin, at least): "For food amidst hunger, for companionship amidst loneliness, for peace amidst violence, we express thanks." What, no mention of global warming? Should other institutions be contemplating similar revisions, we beg them at least to consider a Latin grace that, notwithstanding a pedigree extending back to long before the age of multicultural sensitivities, remains wonderfully inoffensive: *Benedictus benedicat*—"May the Blessed One bless." You see? It invokes the Blessed One without any dogmatic specification as to the nature of Him . . . or Her.

■ Busy days in the world of poetry. Britain has acquired a new poet laureate, 53-year-old Carol Ann Duffy. Ms. Duffy's themes, the British Council website tells us, "include language and the representation of reality; the construction of the self; gender issues; contemporary culture; and many different forms of alienation, oppression, and social inequality." No daffodils, Grecian urns, or great military engagements, then. Duffy is a lesbian, as is Kay Ryan, the current U.S. poet laureate—the first instance of this particular conjunction, so far as we know. Presumably the shade of Sappho is smiling gleefully somewhere. Oxford University has also elected a new professor of poetry: Ruth Padel, a great-great-granddaughter of Charles Darwin, but not confessedly transgressive in any way. Padel's election was soured—or, depending on how seriously you take these events, spiced—by the withdrawal from the race of the Caribbean-British poet (and Nobel Prize–winner) Derek Walcott, following circulation of stories about his having harassed female students. With women now holding all the high poetic offices, at least there will be no more danger of that!

MIMMO JODICE/CORBIS

■ The faculty of Brown University voted to change the name of Columbus Day to something safe: "Fall Weekend." They thereby effaced the name of a man who should be perfectly uncontroversial: an explorer, daring and great, whose actions helped launch this project called the United States—from which all of us, including the Brown faculty, have benefited. "Columbus" is not a name to be ashamed of, or to blacken, but one to esteem.

■ In the late Seventies, Farrah Fawcett had the face that launched a thousand fantasies, as a crime-fighting babe in *Charlie's Angels* and poster girl. She was recently the star of a very different show, *Farrah's Story*, a two-hour documentary on her battle with cancer that drew 8.9 million viewers.

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But what if you could know how those effects were achieved? What if you could learn to understand the often-intimidating language of key signatures, pitch, mode, melody, meter, and other parts of musical structure used by composers? And be able to recognize these various components at work as you listened to your favorite music? What if you could speak the language of Western music?

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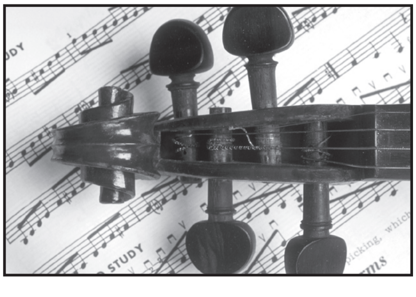
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Professor Robert Greenberg holds degrees from Princeton University and the University of California, Berkeley, where he received a Ph.D. in Music Composition. He has composed more than 45 works and has lectured for many prestigious musical and arts organizations. He is music historian-in-residence with San Francisco Performances, the city's premier presenter of chamber music, instrumental and vocal recitals, jazz, and contemporary dance.

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Three centuries ago, we had rulers, though they were remote, and there were no media to speak of. We knew our neighbors, and their business; they knew ours. Mass communication and pop culture have created a community of 300 million, but it is asymmetrical: We know the stars and the president, but they do not know us. Scattered individuals, from Susan Boyle to serial killers, make the big time, and the Internet—Facebook, Twitter—lets ordinary people cast longer shadows, but the disparity remains—even in death. That is sociology. Pray for those in pain, those you know and those you don't, and give thanks for those prayers when your time comes.

■ *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd got caught lifting a sentence—with only one tiny change—from Josh Marshall's left-wing blog, Talking Points Memo. (The stolen sentence argued that the Bush administration tortured al-Qaeda prisoners to extract evidence for invading Iraq.) Dowd will march on; after all, Doris Kearns Goodwin is still a successful writer. Meanwhile Marshall should rename his blog "Writing Points Memo."

HEALTH CARE

It's All in Your Head

THE most important asset that President Obama has in his effort to transform health-care policy is the consensus inside Washington that he will succeed. As long as the major interest groups believe that a liberal health-care bill is going to pass, they will work with its sponsors rather than incur their wrath. As long as Republicans believe a bill will pass, they will offer modest amendments instead of going all-out in opposition.

This consensus has not been conjured out of thin air. The Democrats have a large and mostly liberal congressional majority and a popular president. But the type of health-care policies they have in mind have serious political vulnerabilities. If opponents can exploit them to reduce public support for the Democrats' plan, then wavering Republicans, moderate Democrats, and the interest groups will start to abandon it.

The public, for its part, wants reforms that address its concerns about health care but is not tied to any particular set of policies. Most people are satisfied with their insurance arrangements and standard of care—more so, indeed, than were in 1993, the last time Washington Democrats took up this issue. They are against rationing and against individual mandates. They are unwilling to see broad-based tax increases and worry about large increases in our already-huge deficits.

Here, then, is the basis in public opinion for a politically successful opposition to the Democrats' health-care plans. Any liberal plan will either raise most people's taxes or raise the deficit, possibly both. Any liberal plan will either impose rationing right away or set the stage for rationing in a few years. And almost any liberal plan will disrupt the existing health-care arrangements of millions of Americans and replace them with something that could well be worse. It could, for example, throw many millions of Americans out of their private insurance and into a public plan, where they might find that their doctors don't want to see them anymore. (Some Democrats promise "Medicare for all," but "Medicaid for all" is at least as likely.)

The selling point for health-care reform is supposed to be that it will make people more secure. Republicans must directly rebut that claim, and then argue that there are ways to make health insurance more secure, affordable, and accessible. Offering tax credits to individuals for whom employer-provided insurance is not available is a way to offer immediate relief to people locked out of the current system, and to move slowly toward a better one.

It's worth noting, too, that more vulnerabilities are likely to emerge as the debate continues. As it becomes clear that the administration intends to expand abortion coverage through its reforms, for example, support will drop. The only question is by how much.

The campaign against Obamacare should be populist. It should say: So what if the health industry and politicians in D.C. are on the same page? Taxpayers and patients aren't being consulted, and they'll be hurt. Opponents should also contrast any bill to Obama's campaign promises. He said he would not push for socialized medicine, and he savaged Republicans for proposing health reforms that would allegedly raise middle-class taxes and throw people off the insurance rolls.

We are willing to concede that the political line-up in Washington is daunting. A conservative reformation of health policy is out of the question. But preventing a federal takeover of health care is very possible. So is laying the groundwork for political change and a future health-care reform worthy of the label. But none of it will happen if Republicans play dead.

HEALTH CARE
WORKING FAMILIES
CAN AFFORD

Long-Term Care Coverage

Who needs it; How to find the right policy

Americans are living longer than ever and are now facing the important decision of whether to purchase long-term care insurance. Most people buy this coverage to help protect assets, preserve independence and provide quality care. A growing number of younger people are buying it to help their aging parents.

The high cost of long-term care could threaten your retirement dreams.

In general, long-term care protection makes the most sense for people with a net worth of $100,000 to $2 million. Those with less will likely exhaust their assets and qualify for Medicaid; those with more can generally fund their own care if they choose to do so.

With over 100 policies on the market, it pays to comparison shop. In fact, the cost of similar coverage from different companies varies by 50 percent or more.

According to *Money Magazine* financial editor, Jean Chatzky, "Your best bet is to get quotes from at least three companies." In addition, you should consider a policy with at least a three-year term — the average time people need care.

Look for a daily benefit that would cover the average daily nursing-facility cost in your area. The national average is averaging $213 per day, or over $77,745 per year.**

70%
of Americans
65 or older
are expected to need
long-term care during
their lifetime.*
40%
needing care today
are between
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Beyond 'No'

As the GOP argues for spending restraint, it should also address the concerns of the middle class.

BY RAMESH PONNURU & RICHARD LOWRY

LIBERALS want to paint Republicans as the party of "no," and conservatives want Republicans actually to be the party of "no." With President Obama pursuing a domestic agenda that would make LBJ blush, "no" is the appropriate word. But it obviously can't be the party's entire vocabulary.

The Republican congressional leadership understands this point and is trying to hash out a broad policy agenda. Eric Cantor's National Council for a New America, the famous "listening tour," is a tentative step in this direction. Upon its announcement, it immediately ran into a buzzsaw of criticism on talk radio and in the blogosphere as a redundant exercise—or a prelude to a pandering sell-out—because it's already evident what the Republican agenda should be: limiting government, plain and simple.

Actually, there is very little that is plain and simple, let alone easy, about limiting government. Too often the task is reduced to just limiting federal spending. But overspending is only one of the ways that government exceeds its proper scope, and it is not always the most damaging way. Federal spending has contributed a great deal to the problems in our health-care markets, for example, but probably not as much as state regulation and federal tax law have.

Very few voters are interested in limiting government for its own sake. They can be persuaded to limit government as a means of improving their lives and their country, but only if conservatives make a concrete case that it will have those effects. A precondition to making that case is devising a program—a set of practical steps conservatives will take once in power—that both respects the proper limits of government and addresses public concerns. Those concerns vary from place to place and year to year. Income-tax rates were a bigger problem for more people in the late 1970s than they are today. That's why conservatives, like any other political movement, need to listen to voters. The foot knows best where the shoe pinches.

Conservatives have adopted a narrow focus on federal spending because of a misinterpretation of Republican defeats in 2006 and 2008. By 2006, congressional Republicans had mostly quit trying to reform the federal government to enable middle-class aspirations. The last time Republicans ran on a domestic agenda was 2000. After that point they coasted on pork and national security. In 2006, though, we were losing in Iraq, and Republicans couldn't admit it. Pork, meanwhile, had led to a spectacular series of cases of corruption. Republicans lost less because of pork projects than because of what had caused them: They had grown more interested in power than in the public good.

Out of power, Republicans should start anew. They need a reform agenda that helps ordinary Americans—better, helps them help themselves—and that can be seen as such. That agenda should center, unapologetically, on the middle class. For as long as today's two major parties have competed, Republicans have been inclined to think in terms of the national interest more than the interest of the nation's subsets. But middle-class families are the country's backbone, not one of its interest groups.

Without a thriving middle class, America will not be a strong country and will certainly not be a country interested in limited government. Republicans should of course pursue policies that enhance the welfare of the poor and even the rich as well as the middle class. But if a policy does not advance middle-class values and interests, it should not be at or near the top of the Republican agenda.

Spending restraint should be part of that agenda. The Obama blowout, and the Republican overspending that preceded it, threaten to crush taxpayers, and not just rich ones, in the years to come. But spending restraint is not enough.

Below we sketch out a few other areas of domestic policy where Republicans, and maybe even some moderate Democrats, could begin to build a new center-right majority. We don't try to be

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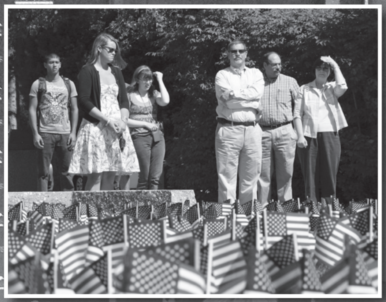

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all-encompassing, and we leave aside several key issues, such as financial regulation, where Republicans need to have answers (and can find some in the splendid work of Kevin D. Williamson and Stephen Spruiell in these pages). We offer our suggestions humbly. There is still much rethinking to be done on the right, and what the political landscape will look like even six months from now is unpredictable. As the Japanese proverb goes, an inch ahead is darkness.

That said, it is clear that pocketbook concerns are going to remain the bread and butter of politics for some time to come. Republicans should focus on easing the cost of living for middle-class families; they should vigorously advocate reforms to address practical anxieties about the health-care system; they should connect their cultural agenda—particularly their emphasis on the importance of marriage—to economic aspiration; they should think hard about mundane quality-of-life issues such as traffic; and they should tap into the populism of the moment by championing democratic accountability.

The party would then have adopted a contemporary version of the kind of populist, middle-class-oriented politics that has been central to Republican successes in the past, including those of Ronald Reagan in 1980 and Newt Gingrich in 1994.

Cost of living. Republicans have to win the tax issue in order to prevail on pocketbook politics. To do so the party desperately needs to move to a post-Bush agenda. Bush's tax cuts on dividends, capital gains, and high incomes will soon expire. Restoring them would be economically beneficial. But Republicans ought to go further. Middle-class families need tax relief too. The chief federal tax they pay is the payroll tax. When parents make the financial sacrifices necessary to raise children, they lighten the payroll-tax burden that Medicare and Social Security place on everyone else. An expanded per-child tax credit, applicable against payroll and income taxes, would recognize that contribution and ease the strain on middle-class budgets.

The cost of college is another source of great anxiety for families and young adults. Policymakers can reduce that anxiety by simplifying financial-aid formulas, by replacing subsidized loans with direct grants as much as possible, and by expanding tax breaks for college savings. A lot of people would benefit, too, if government spending on higher education were redirected from four-year liberal-arts programs to vocational education and two-year community colleges. And we can reasonably ask for more financial transparency from college administrations. The party of the faculty lounge isn't going to volunteer for these assignments.

Opposition to President Obama's cap-and-trade proposal must be part of the Republican message on pocketbook issues: It will impose serious costs throughout the economy in order to reduce environmental risks only modestly (as Jim Manzi explains elsewhere in this issue). Republicans should favor cheap and abundant energy now, and research toward technological breakthroughs that can mitigate the harms of global warming, should they materialize, later.

Also, we suspect that in 2010 and onward it will also be both right and advantageous for Republicans to stand for hard money; why not prepare the ground before inflation gets under way?

Health care. The rising cost of health care has eaten into middle-class wages even as health coverage has gotten less secure. A government takeover of the health-care system, even one in which the private sector was tasked with doing the government's bidding, would probably result first in escalating costs and then in deteriorating care. By replacing existing health-insurance policies, it would add to people's insecurities about their health care and the financing of it. Republicans should instead stand for lower cost, greater stability, and more individual control.

Existing federal policy penalizes individually owned health insurance with higher taxes, and waives state regulation only for insurance provided by large employers. Republicans should propose to move gradually to build a larger, freer market in individually owned insurance. They should promise to end the tax penalty, starting with people who cannot get employer-provided insurance. They should favor letting people in the individual market, too, escape onerous state regulations. Insurance would be cheaper and more accessible, and the majority of people who are satisfied with their existing arrangements could keep them—a promise that Obama also makes but does not deliver on.

Economic aspiration and its cultural basis. The child credit discussed above would, among other things, put money where the party's mouth is. Republicans talk a good game about family values, but have paid insufficient attention to the economic basis of family life. Familial stability is a crucial precondition for economic mobility, but it is a diminishing resource. There is not much that governments can do directly to promote it, or at least not much that many people would have the stomach for. But conservatives need at least to make the case for traditionalism and marriage in practical as well as moral terms.

The restoration of a marriage culture would be particularly good for people in the lower middle class and people striving to ascend to it. Republicans are not much exercised by inequality per se, nor should they be. But they should care about whether people can climb the economic ladder. Speaking of which: Some enterprising governor could do a lot of good by taking on the absurdly elaborate licensure rules that restrict entry into many occupations.

Quality of life. Sometimes politics throws up issues that aren't the least bit sexy and that conservatives have very little interest in. For example: traffic. Republicans have suffered in state after state from failing to attend to public concerns about traffic congestion. The most market-friendly solution to the problem—congestion pricing on private roads—tends to be popular once implemented, but road pricing is extremely unpopular to propose. Yet technology has made progress possible here. Replacing existing toll booths with flexible electronic-collection methods ought to be popular, since it speeds up traffic without raising costs overall. East Coast Republicans, in particular, ought to take note. If new systems work, they could quickly spread.

Small-d democracy. Promoting the middle-class basis of American democracy will be a hollow victory if democratic norms have themselves eroded. Democratic accountability is threatened by the continued liberal instinct for judicial rule, as on same-sex marriage. The use of unelected agencies to impose sweeping regulatory regimes, as the EPA threatens to do with respect to global warming, is another affront to popular rule. Nor should we ignore the rapid development of an anomalous "TARP state" in which executive-branch officials have vast discretion in governing much of our economic life. Republicans should oppose

“Bailout Nation” as much in the name of democracy as in the name of markets. The fight for American sovereignty is also a fight for democracy: A principal reason to fear supranational government, even in small increments, is that there is no international public to hold it to account.

As this discussion should make clear, a new Republican agenda geared to the middle class would have both negative and positive sides. In practice most of the party’s time will be spent resisting Obama initiatives—on taxes, health care, judges, global warming—that threaten middle-class interests and values. In some of these cases effective resistance will require the presentation of attractive alternatives. In other cases, Republicans will have to devise conservative policies that address new public sentiments.

We have only sketched a start along this path. The challenge is to connect long-standing conservative principles to the needs and desires of a changing electorate. The middle class, and the political center, is too important to be left to Joe Biden and Chuck Schumer. **NR**

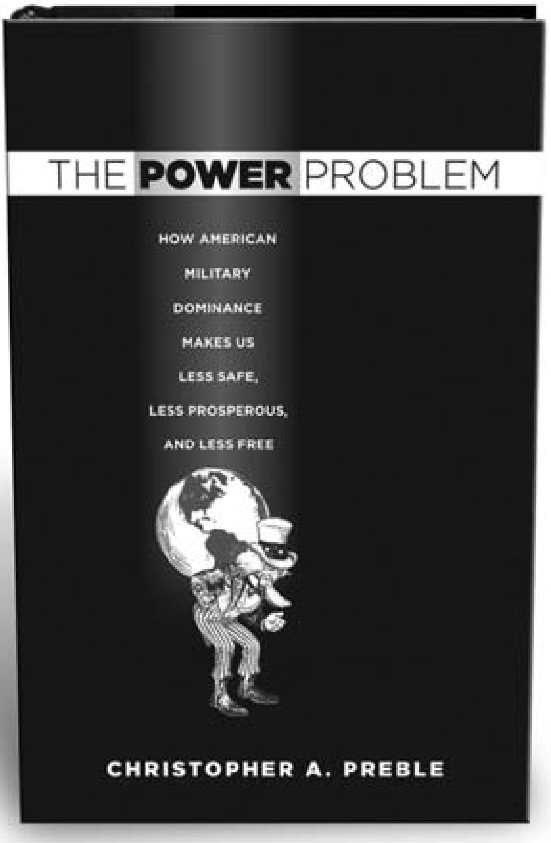
The Committee to Reinflate the Bubble

The real-estate lobby wants another boom—but what about the bust?

BY KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON

At one time, the NRA was considered the most powerful lobby in politics. Swap two letters and you have a different, lower-profile powerhouse: the NAR—the National Association of Realtors. The housing bubble was a product of public policy, and that public policy was driven by an influential alliance of real-estate brokers and developers who helped inflate housing prices, and real-estate agents’ commissions, to nosebleed levels. But the real-estate lobby isn’t limited to the brick-and-shingle pushers and the guys in the gold blazers. Local governments are deeply reliant on property-tax revenue, especially for schools, while market-distorting tax breaks directed at rewarding homeownership are sacrosanct to the American middle class—and to tax-battling conservatives, too. The real-estate lobby’s immediate agenda: Reinflate the housing bubble.

As it goes about its political business, the real-estate lobby is not snooty about the company it keeps. Republican, Democrat, Left or Right—tic the preferred policy boxes and not much else matters. You can even be the sort of person who, in private life, would be the real-estate industry’s worst nightmare: Consider Laura Richardson. In the course of four years, she managed to find herself in default on eight separate occasions for mortgages covering three different houses in California, real estate’s Armageddon. In one case, she took out a nothing-down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By exploring the aims, costs, and limitations of the use of America’s military power, Cato Institute scholar Christopher Preble makes the case that recent foreign policy experiences have been marked by the promiscuous use of armed intervention. Preble documents how our vast military strength runs contrary to the original intent of the nation’s founders, and has shifted the balance of power away from individual citizens and toward the central government, and from the legislative and judicial branches of government to the executive.

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mortgage and cashed out by taking $15,000 up front from the seller to cover closing costs but ignored her payments, letting the house slide first into disrepair and then into foreclosure. But the real-estate industry didn't blacklist her. They sent her to Congress. Even better, they sent her to Vegas.

The National Association of Realtors spent $12 million in the 2008 election cycle, with the No. 1 recipient of their generosity being Representative Richardson, a Long Beach, Calif., Democrat who once held a real-estate license of her own. Their political-action committee put $20,000 into her campaign—making it by far her largest non-union donor. They also flew her to Las Vegas to participate in the swearing-in of a new NAR president. "I might be one of the newest members of Congress," she told those gathered for the inauguration, "but I am not a new member of the realtor party."

The party is spreading the political wealth: The NAR was the largest PAC donor to candidates in the 2008 election cycle, and, like the rest of the real-estate and financial sector, it dumped most of its money on Democrats. Other top PAC donors for the last election cycle included, to no one's great surprise, more real-estate interests: the American Bankers Association and the National Association of Home Builders. Representative Richardson's supporters include such familiar firms as Countrywide, a name now synonymous with the housing debacle.

The populist critique of lobbying—that it amounts to bribery—is only episodically accurate, and though the real-estate lobby has been generous with its money, the truth is that most Americans are true believers in homeownership, picket-fence romantics. Policies that encourage and reward homeownership are deeply embedded into our government and financial institutions, from the mortgage-interest deduction to the FHA loan. It's a case of the best of intentions' producing the worst of economics.

Consider the case of the government-sponsored enterprises (GSEs), Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which are at the center of the current meltdown. The GSEs created a market for poorly assessed real-estate securities based on mortgages implicitly guaranteed by the U.S. government, but doing this made it easier and cheaper for people to get mortgages, so nobody much bothered. Their mission was encouraged, and sometimes distorted, by political forces left and right. There was tremendous political pressure from Barack Obama's community-organizing gang to get banks and institutions to loosen lending standards. The most frequently cited example of this is the Community Reinvestment Act, the effects of which probably have been overstated, but there is no denying that for a decade Barney Frank labored furiously against Republican efforts at tightening Fannie oversight. At the same time, tax-cutting Republicans zealously defended the mortgage-interest deduction, which did much to encourage interest-only loans during the boom—and added a new tax break, the capital-gains tax exemption for home sales, the effects of which are only now becoming clear.

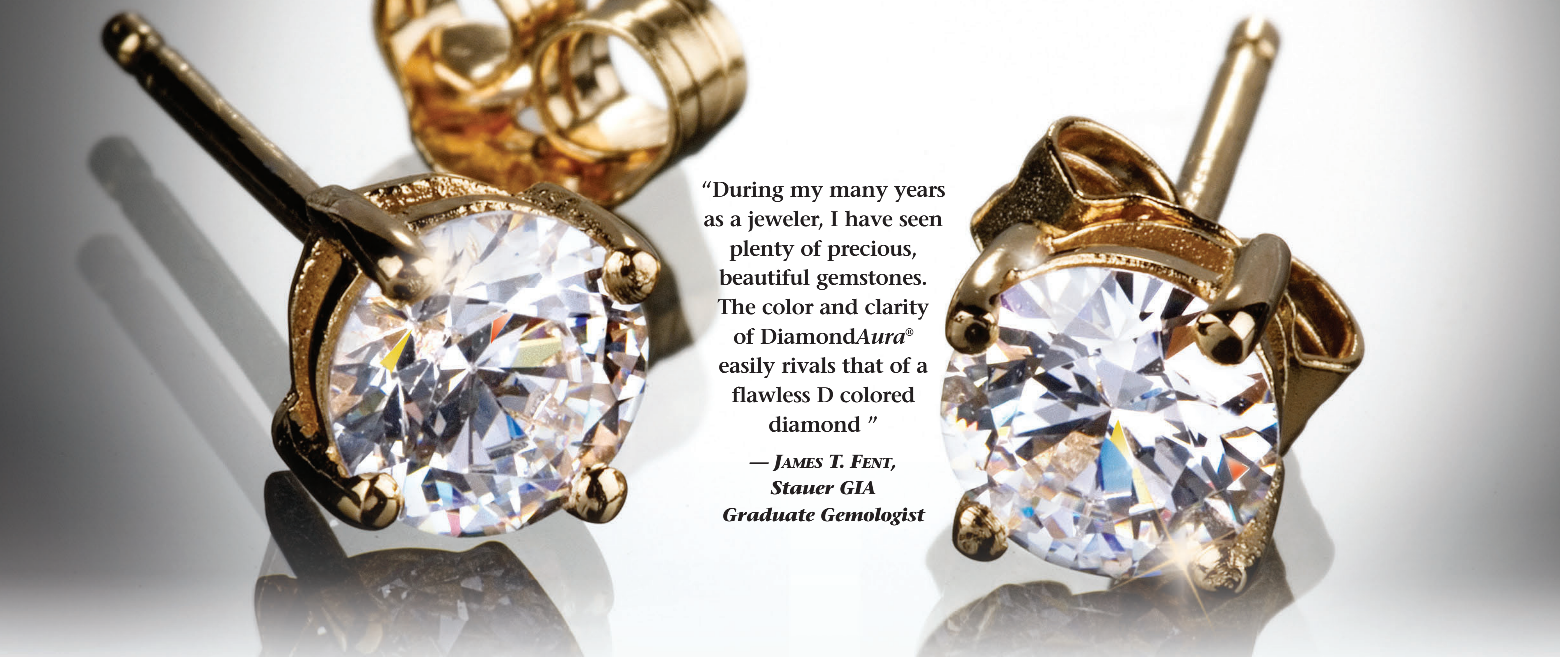
The Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997 might well have been called the House Flippers' Enabling Act, and it put a lot of money into the pockets of a lot of realtors: The law exempts most home sellers from paying capital-gains taxes on houses, without requiring them to invest the profits in new houses. It created what might be called a literal tax shelter: an investment you could live in while escaping the 20 percent tax on capital gains. When the dot-com bubble burst, the lure of tax-free real assets attracted a lot of investors looking to ride out market turbulence in the comfort of their new, highly leveraged homes. Republicans love a capital-gains tax cut, and they should, but creating special tax breaks for particular investments inevitably will warp the market. Predictably, capital gushed out of dot-bomb and into the housing bubble.

The result was the sort of thing that should offend every conservative's inner Puritan: Buyers stopped calculating whether they could afford the house, and instead calculated whether they could afford the mortgage. The more daring buyers took out interest-only mortgages, placing a counter-intuitive bet that buying a house they couldn't afford would make them rich enough to afford it. That bet was hedged up by what is probably the most popular item in the U.S. tax code: the mortgage-interest deduction. That made interest-only loans a sweet deal indeed for the investors with good timing, which set off a rodeo of speculation: Borrow the whole nut, pay nothing but interest (which, thanks to the work of Alan Greenspan, might be less than rent would have run), get a huge income-tax benefit in return thanks to the mortgage-interest deduction, sell the house at a profit, and pay no taxes on the capital gain. Place a losing bet and you end up bankrupt or in foreclosure.

Protecting the mortgage-interest deduction is the first item on the National Association of Realtors's political to-do list, and there's broad bipartisan support in Congress for America's favorite tax break. President Obama is on the other side: He is shaping up to be a real windmill jouster when it comes to class warfare, and he wants to phase out the mortgage-interest deduction for families earning more than $250,000. That proposal has about as good a chance of seeing the light of day as Obama's college transcripts.

When it comes to "affordability," the real-estate lobby has a wonderful talent for doublespeak. Criticizing Obama's mortgage-interest-deduction proposal, National Association of Home Builders chairman Joe Robson complained that the move would "increase the cost of housing for many middle-class families." But then he added that the proposal "will only further undercut the housing market" and "exert more downward pressure on home values." Translation: Down is up. Of course a tax break would save homebuyers some cash; but "more downward pressure on home values" would save them a whole bunch more, and the most important factor working to "increase the cost of housing for many middle-class families"

DARREN GYGI



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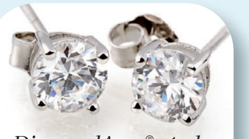

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hasn't been federal taxes, but rising house prices.

Special tax breaks have an army of supporters, and the realtors aren't the only brigade on the march. For years, real-estate developers funneled money through nonprofits to provide down-payment grants to FHA borrowers who couldn't even put together the 3 to 3.5 percent down payment required at the time. Classified as "gifts" for tax and legal purposes, these payments were described as "a scam" by the IRS, and Congress banned the practice in 2008, with critics saying it weakened lending practices and encouraged appraisal fraud. A bill to rescind the ban already has been introduced by Texas Democrat Al Green. Seller-funded down-payment assistance remains prohibited, but the real-estate lobby strongly supports bringing it back, and there is support in Congress for doing so.

But the fact that home builders can't game the banks by giving away "free" down-payment money doesn't mean that politicians can't—and politicians, let us not forget, are part of the real-estate lobby too, especially the politicos who depend on real-estate taxes to fund their crusades. At the local level, cities such as Fort Worth, Texas, are using federal money to cover down payments for buyers of foreclosed houses in politically targeted ZIP codes. These programs are not aimed at helping the poor become homeowners, but the opposite: keeping prices high. In Utah, where housing prices are slightly lower than the national average, taxpayer-funded grants are used as an incentive for homebuyers with no upward limit on the price of the house, and the state has spent millions subsidizing the purchase of houses costing up to $700,000. The real-estate lobby fought hard to make sure that the stimulus bill would pour money into programs like this, and the grants can be combined with the new $8,000 federal tax rebate for first-time homebuyers, also part of the stimulus. The government will pay you good money to buy a house. What other lobby gets those results?

So what's the next step for the Committee to Reinflate the Bubble? As keynote speaker at its annual conference this year, the NAR has invited Alan Greenspan, the godfather of the bubble. If that's an indication of where the real-estate lobby's heads are at, their heads are in a bubble, and they're blowing as hard as they can. **NR**

Trust the Afghan Army

A 'new approach' that will work

BY BING WEST

Along the Durand Line,
Northeast Afghanistan

THE view from the Karir Pass on the Durand Line separating Afghanistan from Pakistan is spectacular. To the west, a river meanders toward the city of Jalalabad. To the east, Pakistani towns lie amidst emerald green swaths of farmland that stretch to the horizon. I am accompanying Lt. Col. Mark O'Donnell, commander of the 1st Battalion of the 32nd Infantry Regiment, and his scout platoon on a visit to the Pakistani outpost, 100 miles northeast of Kabul. Although their post has a panoramic view, the Pakistani soldiers say they haven't challenged anyone crossing the border. They explain that they cannot even visit the nearby Pakistani village, because the Taliban would kill them.

Because the Pakistani (and Afghan) border forces aren't up to the job, the mission of the 1st Battalion is to control an 80-mile section of the border. But the Durand Line runs for 1,600 miles. Looking down on the valleys on both sides gives an impression of the vastness of the challenge.

After leaving the Durand Line, I visit the seasoned French 10th Mountaineer Brigade, operating in the mountains and valleys east of Kabul. I ask their commander what the critical strengths of the Taliban and the ten other fundamentalist gangs opposing him are. "Watchers and information manipulation," he says, succinctly summarizing the security problem.

By "watchers," he means the network of sympathizers and sentries, including women and the ubiquitous goat herders, who warn of the approach of NATO forces. When I accompanied patrols with Viper Company of the 26th Infantry Regiment in the Korengal Valley, the interpreters could hear the watchers reporting our movements over handheld radios. The fundamentalists took inaccurate shots at us from 600 meters away and then ducked into ravines when our A-10 jets appeared. This system of over-watch has enabled the enemy to control their casualties in their mountain strongholds, while in the villages their spies intimidate the people, preventing the flow of information to friendly forces.

When I accompanied a U.S.-Afghan army platoon to make a rare arrest in a thriving town north of Kabul, hundreds of unsmiling Afghan males with folded arms gathered around us. Some muttered "feringhee" (foreigner) as I walked past. Well, I was wearing my Red Sox cap in a cricket-playing nation. But who was watching them? "I don't know what's in their minds," First Sgt. Jason Rivas said, staring back at the dispassionate crowd. "I do know the Taliban owns the night. They come and go as they please. We're rarely out here, and everyone knows when we're coming."

Maj. Jason Dempsey, the battalion's operations officer, showed me pictures of teenagers placing boulders behind U.S. vehicles so they cannot turn around when under attack. The Taliban and other opposition groups appeal to a mixture of tribal jealousies, xenophobia, and Islamic fundamentalism. Yet instead of issuing a nationalist rallying cry to discredit the Taliban, Afghan president Hamid Karzai emphasizes civilian casualties caused by American air attacks. "We don't have the moral high ground," Karzai said recently, while comfortably ensconced in a TV studio in Washington, D.C. A weak leader likely to be reelected for another five-year term in August, Karzai is politically tone-deaf. He reinforces the disinformation campaign of the Taliban, instead of developing messages that undercut theirs. Despite little fighting and very low casualties by Afghan or other historical measures, his administration has lost ground to the Taliban and like-minded fundamentalists. A shadow government has gradually emerged in large swaths of the rural areas.

In response, over the past year, the U.S. military in Regional Command East, around Kabul and to its north and east, has adopted the Petraeus model from Iraq and deployed over 100 U.S. and Afghan companies in outposts among the population. This maneuver has reestablished some control, as evidenced by a drop in violence

Mr. West is a former assistant secretary of defense and combat Marine who frequently reports from Iraq and Afghanistan. His latest book is The Strongest Tribe: War, Politics and the Endgame in Iraq.

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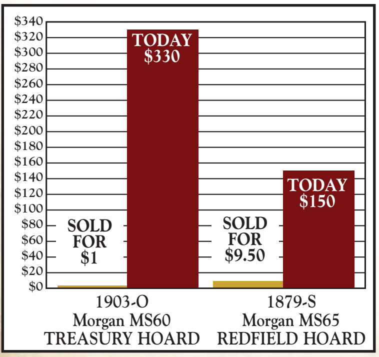

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Note: GovMint.com is a private distributor of government and private coin and medallic issues and is not affiliated with the United States Government. Facts and figures were deemed accurate as of April 2009. Prices and availability subject to change without notice. ©GovMint.com, 2009 affecting civilians. But the Americans are still foreigners controlling a population that, fearing retribution, rarely offers information that identifies the fundamentalists. In Iraq in 2007, Gen. David Petraeus presided over a shift in Sunni attitudes that led to a steady flow of information against al-Qaeda. Nothing similar has happened in Afghanistan. Until the local population decides to inform, the government in Kabul faces a serious problem.

In Regional Command South, including the key poppy-growing centers and the city of Kandahar, the security situation is worse. But 10,000 U.S. soldiers and Marines are surging into that area to clear the populated zones and then turn over the task of population protection to Afghan forces. By the fall, they can be expected to push back the Taliban. But what happens after that? How will Kabul solidify the gains?

On May 11, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates replaced the commander in Afghanistan, Gen. David McKiernan, with Lt. Gen. Stanley McChrystal. Changing commanders had less to do with redirecting strategy than with strengthening teamwork. In March, President Obama had announced a new Afghanistan-Pakistan policy that sounded like a continuation of the Bush policy. At that time, Bruce Riedel, Obama's point man on Afghanistan, stressed that the president had laid out "a strategy" and that "it's not intended to be a campaign plan."

Not picking up on the clear signal that a campaign plan was necessary but still missing, McKiernan failed to produce one. Petraeus, when in Iraq, had issued clear letters of his intent to all the soldiers. In contrast, McKiernan did not share his vision with his soldiers. He remained aloof and detached from his troops and from Washington. So Gates, in a shift that showed the power of Petraeus behind the scenes, selected some aggressive but compatible personalities. McChrystal had worked closely with Petraeus, Gates, and Adm. Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Because they are comfortable with one another, these four men share perspectives candidly. Soon there will be five: Adm. James Stavridis has just been appointed NATO commander. For the past three years, he has served as U.S. commander for Latin America, dealing with the drug wars. That experience is critically needed in Afghanistan, which is a major opium producer.

Gates must insist that either Mullen or Petraeus provide an objective risk assessment, independent of McChrystal. By way of analogy, every corporate board of trustees has an assigned risk assessor. Some senior general must remain detached enough from the day-to-day diplomatic and military crises in Afghanistan to warn if the strategy writ large is going awry.

As for the military campaign plan itself, it has still not been written. "Our mission," Gates said, "requires new thinking and new approaches from our military leaders." Does that mean that the deployment into outposts was a mistake—or that the Marines are wrong to try to clear the populated areas and then transition population protection to Afghan forces? No: The basic concepts appear sound. But operations are proceeding at a slow pace, because the size and bulk of each unit leaving the bases is large in order to minimize casualties.

So what "new approaches" should be included in the campaign plan? The first step is to agree that the goal is not to win, but to turn the war over to the Afghans. Many—perhaps most—Afghans have become accustomed to letting America and NATO do most of the fighting for them and deliver economic improvements. At the same time, they want to keep their distance from foreigners, accommodate the fundamentalists, and cling to the tribal values challenged by modernity. How do we put Afghans in the lead in their own country, to settle their own differences, while not losing the country to fundamentalists intent on attacking us?

There are two basic options. First, we can put more resources and urgency into the standard counterinsurgency approach. Militarily, this means recruiting more local militia at the village level. Once the overt Taliban fighters are pushed out of a populated area, a force has to come in to impose order, and that includes arresting seditionists. The traditional solution would call for improving the wretched police and installing American civilians to advise (and supervise) the district and provincial officials and thus strengthen the sinews of government. This approach would take several more years and several hundred million dollars not yet budgeted.

The second approach is more radical: strengthen the Afghan military as the backbone of government. Since the war cannot be won by killing the fundamentalists, they must be separated from the population. That is not happening. The U.S. holds about 600 prisoners in Afghanistan. Another 400 are held in the central Afghan prison. The number of enemy fighters imprisoned is absurdly disproportionate to the violence and intimidation—and amounts to a severe critique of intelligence and police effectiveness.

The enemy lives somewhere; it needs housing, food, transportation, resupply, etc. We have not trained Afghan units to acquire and run agents at the village and district levels, and to arrest the supporters of the fundamentalists. Our Special Operations Forces and CIA do a good job with the high-level enemy operatives, but the lower-level agents are walking around free and without fear. Lincoln suspended habeas corpus and 13,000 Americans were arrested under martial law. There must be a similarly stiff penalty for sedition, and knowledge among the population that the Afghan government has agents, a net of informers, a military that makes arrests, and adequate prisons.

The U.S. should fund a pension plan to allow the quick retirement with dignity of a raft of superannuated Afghan officers who are performing poorly but have no means of living if they retire. In return, the U.S. should insist on joint U.S.-Afghan promotion boards for Afghan military and police officers at the company command level and above. As it stands now, our advisers can tell which leaders are poor or corrupt—but they can do little about it.

The police cannot function without a military umbrella, but the military can function as police. Instead of moving frequently, Afghan battalions should remain for years in one locale, so they become acquainted with the local politics. The police should be placed under army control. The army can also supervise the services supposedly provided by district and provincial officials.

This is a step back from the democratic model by which the Eastern European nations emerged from Communism. It points toward Turkey or Pakistan, or Mexico until recently. The American goal, however, is to prevent Afghanistan from becoming again a sanctuary for Islamic fundamentalists. The Afghan army, the nation's most respected institution, is already working hand in hand with our military and offers the fastest means of reducing our burden in that country. **NR**

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‘All the Gaps Are Bridgeable’

What a PLO man and an Israeli think of peace between their sides

BY JAY NORDLINGER

The Dead Sea, Jordan

I first saw them together in Davos, two years ago. Saeb Erekat was chief negotiator for the PLO; Ephraim Sneh was the chief negotiator for Israel. They were like an old married couple, finishing each other’s sentences. But, unlike many married couples, they did not disagree on anything. They were in complete accord. It was obvious what had to be done, they said: two independent states, side by side, separated by the 1967 borders (more or less). There was some wrangling to go through where refugees and Jerusalem were concerned. Other than that: piece of cake.

With those two, Palestinian-Israeli peace seemed ridiculously easy. It was perverse that such peace had not already been achieved.

We are now in Jordan, by the Dead Sea, at another forum arranged by the Davos people. Erekat and Sneh are again among the throng. Erekat is still chief negotiator for the PLO, because there is not much rotation in office in that state-to-be, or would-be state. Sneh is out of government: but still cuts a figure in Israeli politics. He lights up at the sight of Erekat, who is giving a TV interview. He obviously gets a kick out of him.

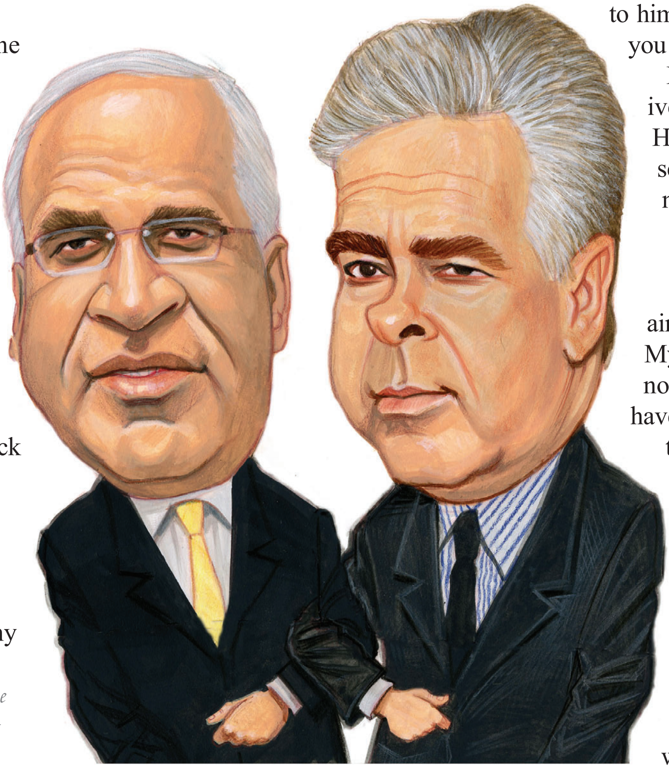
“When I was governor of the West Bank, I hated his big mouth,” he says. “But many things have changed since then.” He tells me about the time Tony Blair saw them huddled together in the American Colony Hotel (Jerusalem). “What secrets are you sharing?” said Blair. What the men were doing was sharing pictures of their granddaughters on their cellphones.

Mr. Nordlinger’s multipart journal from the World Economic Forum on the Middle East can be found at www.nationalreview.com/middleeastjournal09.

Some people don’t trust Erekat as far as they could throw him. Other people say that he is as reasonable and trustworthy as anybody in the PLO. Some people may think both: that you can’t trust him and that he is the best the PLO has to offer. That is a very, very skeptical group indeed.

He was born in East Jerusalem, 1955. In other words, he was born under Jordanian occupation—which you did not hear much squawking about. The young man went to San Francisco State for his B.A. and his M.A., and then to Bradford University in England for his Ph.D. This degree is in peace studies. He is called “Dr. Erekat,” as Sneh is called “Dr. Sneh.” And this was the subject of the most charming thing I have ever heard a PLO man say.

During their joint appearance in Davos, Erekat said, “Ephraim is a *real* doctor. [A specialist in internal medicine.] I am a doctor of blah, blah, blah.” And with this he made a gesture that signaled words streaming out of his mouth. Erekat is, indeed, a talker, and a strong-willed, aggressive one.



Saeb Erekat and Ephraim Sneh

ISMAEL ROLDAN

For many years, he has been not only the PLO’s chief negotiator, but its chief spokesman, too. I have likened him to Vladimir Posner, the old Soviet flack. Erekat has a repertoire of American and British idioms. In Jerusalem once, I heard him say, “I’m not bullsh**ting you.” He was Yasser Arafat’s close aide, and also his interpreter. Moreover, he was the chairman’s face to the outside world—“Mr. Outside,” I called him. It was a better face than the chairman’s, as are most.

That day in Jerusalem, he admonished a group of us pro-Israel types. He said—and I paraphrase—“I represent the peace camp in Palestine. And if you reject me, you will put the radicals in charge. Is that what you want?”

And in Davos, he said some things that almost moved me, I confess. For instance, I asked him, wearily, why he thought peace was within grasp, after so many decades of irreconcilability and violence. In answer, he spoke of a hunger for peace on both sides. And both sides had suffered, he said. Rarely have I heard PLO spokesmen acknowledge Israeli suffering. He also said that, when he goes through Israeli checkpoints, the soldiers recognize him, from television. And they say, “Dr. Erekat, why can’t you bring us peace?” Furthermore, Palestinians berate him in public for dealing with the enemy—Israel. And then they scurry up to him and whisper, “Dr. Erekat, can’t you bring us peace?”

Here in Jordan, he is in a combative, not to say unpleasant, mood. He is a poor, put-upon fellow, you see. “I am the most disadvantaged negotiator in history, ever since Eve negotiated with Adam.” (Again, I paraphrase, but closely.) “I have no army, no navy, no air force, no economy, no anything. My people are fragmented. I have no chance in the United States. I have no voters there. But who said that life was about fairness and justice?”

Erekat is not so disadvantaged, of course: Israel is the most reviled nation on earth, practically a pariah among nations. The U.N. sometimes seems organized to oppose the Israelis and boost the Palestinians. That has to be worth something to this negotiator.

He always stresses democracy, saying that anyone who suggests that Arabs are unsuited to democracy "is a racist." He says that, in the territories, "democracy didn't fail: Hamas failed." It "resorted to bullets and coups d'état," instead of ballots.

I ask him why an Israeli, seeing what followed Israel's withdrawal from Gaza four years ago, should be eager to withdraw from the West Bank. In other words, will there be a second terror state? Erekat cites Israel's agreements with Egypt and Jordan: They are strong, remaining in place. The problem in Gaza—and the problem in South Lebanon—was that Israel withdrew unilaterally. They "should have talked to me," the Israelis should have. "Their unilateralism did not work. It failed, big-time." It would be nice if the Israelis learned from their mistakes, says Erekat, "but they never admit mistakes."

When people talk so sweepingly about Palestinians—Erekat is not very approving.

In any event, Ephraim Sneh agrees with him entirely, about Gaza and South Lebanon: Israeli "unilateralism" failed big-time. In the case of Gaza, Israel wound up making a gift to Hamas. Sneh agrees with Erekat about most other things, too. He believes that a settlement is easy—outright easy: because "all the gaps are bridgeable." Even the question of refugees, even the question of Jerusalem.

What is important in dealing with the Palestinians, he says, is to stay away from history, blame, and so on. Play on the level of practicalities: what can be done starting now. "Put all the past aside, and stop what I call the 'comparative victimology'": who did what to whom, when.

Sneh was born in Tel Aviv, four years before the Jewish state (i.e., in 1944). His father, Moshe Sneh, was a leader of Israeli Communism. Ephraim Sneh was a party member until he was 27. After a distinguished—highly distinguished—military career, he joined Labor. Last year, he bolted his longtime party to found his own: Yisrael Hazaka ("Strong Israel").

He calls himself a social democrat, and one who is "on the sane middle ground" when it comes to national security. In fact, he is quite hawkish, about Iran and any other threat to Israel. When I suggest a comparison to Scoop Jackson, he smiles and says, "Americans often say that to me. Is that a compliment? I'm not familiar enough with American politics to know." (I assure him he could do much worse, for comparisons.)

Sneh says that you can trust Erekat, for he is "committed to the idea of peace." But how is he different from Arafat? "Oh, come on," the doctor scoffs. "He is different by ideology and by credibility." He says that you could not make peace with Arafat, because he wanted peace "only according to 100 percent of his demands." The "disappearance" of Arafat, as he puts it, offered a new chance: but the Israelis did not seize it. They missed a "golden opportunity" to strike a deal with the new crew.

Yet Sneh believes that a deal can still be reached. Once that happened, it would take four or five years to implement, he says. The most difficult part would be "the relocation of the settlers"—the uprooted Jews. It could not be done "in a brutal, harsh way," as in Gaza. Sneh allows that hatred now abides in human hearts, both Palestinian and Israeli. "But I believe that peace, cooperation, and prosperity will easily wash it away, clean it out," over time.

And the new prime minister—the new-old prime minister, Netanyahu? "He is surrounded by hardliners," says Sneh, "which I'm afraid will make it difficult for him to take the right steps." But Netanyahu by himself is "pragmatic enough" to accomplish the necessary.

I can't help asking Sneh about President Bush (43), who is being bashed here, as always: especially by Americans and Europeans. He says, in a broad assessment, "He had the balls to stand up to evil. He was clumsy, and he made mistakes. But he had the balls to stand up to Islamic fascism."

Sneh is an interesting man of the Israeli Left, or semi-Left, seeming fuzzy one minute, and hard as nails the next. He gets your attention. And when he teams up with Erekat, you can almost see a Palestinian-Israeli future: a good one. Yet what from the PLO is to be believed? Another PLO man, Abbas Zaki, their ambassador to Lebanon, goes on television—Arab television—to say that the two-state solution is a mere ruse: just a phase, part of the old PLO incrementalism. In good time, the Jewish state will collapse entirely, and the Palestinians will have it all, rightfully.

The Erekat-Sneh vision could be sheer illusion. Then again, what if it were not? **NR**

The Parent Problem

On the persistent link between family structure and black poverty.

BY DUNCAN CURRIE

In late March, the Urban League issued its 2009 "State of Black America" report, which declared that "African Americans remain twice as likely as whites to be unemployed, three times more likely to live in poverty, and more than six times as likely to be incarcerated." A week earlier, the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) released figures showing that in 2007, 71.6 percent of black births were to unmarried women, compared with 27.8 percent of non-Hispanic white births. The NCHS numbers came out shortly after the Census Bureau published data from its Current Population Survey (CPS). Among other things, the CPS found that in 2008, only 38 percent of black children lived with two parents, compared with 78 percent of non-Hispanic white children.

These statistics are inextricably connected. Just ask Barack Obama. "More than half of all black children live in single-parent households, a number that has doubled—doubled—since we were children," Obama told a predominantly black congregation at Chicago's Apostolic Church of God on Father's Day 2008. "Children who grow up without a father are five times more likely to live in poverty and commit crime, nine times more likely to drop out of schools, and 20 times more likely to end up in prison."

Indeed, while family breakdown is hardly the only cause of persistent racial gaps in areas such as income and education, it poses a major obstacle to reducing those gaps. More broadly, disparities in family environments are closely related to overall U.S. economic inequality, which has increased during the past few decades.

In their book *The Race Between Education and Technology*, Harvard economists Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz argue that since the early 1980s, the combination of "skill-biased technological change" (the computer revolution) and "a sharp *decrease* in the growth rate of the relative supply of educated workers" has greatly boosted returns to education and sent the college wage premium soaring. According to Goldin and Katz, "the wage premium for college graduates relative to high school workers" spiked from 36.7 percent to 86.6 percent between 1950 and 2005, with "most of the increase" taking place after 1980.

Meanwhile, says University of Chicago economist Derek Neal, the black-white skill gap stopped narrowing around 1990, at a time when the skill premium was skyrocketing. "There's a pattern of consistent progress all through the Forties, Fifties, Sixties, Seventies, and Eighties," he says. But there was no discernible progress on closing the gap between 1990 and 2000; if anything, Neal indicates, the gap may have actually widened over that period.

What explains this? Neal, director of Chicago Workshop on Black-White Inequality, says there is no clear answer. But he has written that "beginning around 1980, many factors worked together to diminish the resources available to black children. Two-parent families became even more rare in the black community, and for the first time, never-married motherhood became quite common. Further, real wages for less skilled workers fell, and the real value of transfers offered by various welfare programs declined." Neal contends that "the magnitude of the overall relative decline in black family income since 1980 is related to changes in black family structure and the weak growth of household income among black single parents."

Columbia social scientist Jane Waldfogel reckons that black-white skill levels began converging again in the late 1990s, citing evidence from the National Assessment of Educational Progress long-term trend tests. "When you look at the period from 1999 to 2008, you see the gap starting to close again, particularly in reading for 9- and 13-year-olds," she says. Waldfogel notes that "there was a big decline in black child poverty in the late 1990s," which she attributes to a booming economy, the expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit, and welfare reform. She also credits school-accountability initiatives such as the No Child Left Behind Act with helping to trim the black-white skill gap. Neal is less optimistic. "I'm not convinced that progress has started again," he says.

Harvard economist Roland Fryer emphasizes that blacks and whites enjoy the same rate of return on their educational investments, yet blacks aren't investing at the same rate as whites. He points out that the black-white skill gap emerges before children enter kindergarten. After analyzing data from the Department of Education's Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Fryer and University of Chicago economist Steven Levitt concluded that the racial achievement gap among incoming kindergartners could be virtually eliminated by controlling for several background characteristics. However, even "observationally equivalent" black and white students diverged once they were in school.

Neal has written that the early appearance of a black-white test-score gap "is consistent with the idea that the black-white skill gap among young adults can be traced, in large measure, to black-white differences in the types of investments made in children at early ages." And "at the dawn of the 21st century, black-white differences in family environments are by far the most important source of black-white differences in levels of resources devoted to children."

Economist James Heckman, Neal's University of Chicago colleague, has conducted related research on the development of cognitive and non-cognitive abilities. He believes there is a divide emerging between the children born into disadvantaged family environments and those born into better family environments. "The proper measure of disadvantage is not necessarily family poverty or parental education," Heckman explains. "The available evidence suggests that the quality of *parenting* is the important scarce resource."

This has implications for anti-inequality measures. "In designing policies to combat inequality," Heckman writes, "it is important to recognize that about 50 percent of the variance in inequality in lifetime earnings is determined by age 18. The family plays a powerful role in shaping adult outcomes that is not fully appreciated by current American policies."

The more we appreciate the linkage between family environments and inequality, the more we appreciate the significance of out-of-wedlock birthrates. "All measures of childbearing by unmarried women rose to historic levels in 2007," the NCHS reports. The overall out-of-wedlock birthrate in 2007 stood at nearly 40 percent, while the rate among Hispanics passed 50 percent.

In his controversial 1965 Labor Department report calling for "a national effort" to stabilize African-American families, Daniel Patrick Moynihan noted that the black out-of-wedlock birthrate had jumped from 16.8 percent in 1940 to 23.6 percent in 1963 (over that same period, the rate among whites had increased from 2 percent to just over 3 percent). At the time, 23.6 percent seemed startlingly high—but compared with 71.6 percent (the black rate in 2007), it seems relatively low. The rate among non-Hispanic whites in 2007 was higher than the rate among blacks in 1963.

What if black family composition had not changed between 1960 and 1988? Under those conditions, according to sociologists David Eggebeen of Penn State and Daniel Lichter of Cornell, the black child poverty rate in 1988 would have been 17.2 percentage points lower. Eggebeen and Lichter detailed their findings in a 1991 *American Sociological Review* article. They wrote that "the changing family structure among black and white children has clearly *exacerbated* long-standing racial differences in child poverty. Indeed, in the absence of widening racial differences in family structure, the 1960–1988 period would have brought substantial *convergence* in racial differences in official, deep, and relative child poverty."

Among others, Urban Institute economist Robert Lerman has done valuable work on the economic benefits of marriage. "The apparent gains from marriage are particularly high among black households," he wrote in a 2002 paper. In a separate report coauthored with Israeli economist Avner Ahituv, Lerman demonstrated that, on balance, married black men earn higher wages and work longer hours than never-married black men. In a more recent study of middle-class households, Lerman estimated that between 1989 and 2004, the net worth of "middle-income *married* parents" increased by 52 percent while that of "middle-income *unmarried* parents" actually decreased by 15 percent.

President Obama is now in a unique position to shape black attitudes toward marriage and fatherhood. His 2008 Father's Day message was clear: "We need fathers to realize that responsibility does not end at conception. We need them to realize that what makes you a man is not the ability to have a child—it's the courage to raise one." That is a message well worth repeating. **NR**

Mitch The Knife

At OMB they called him 'The Blade'—and now he's taking a scalpel to Indiana's budget.

BY MARK HEMINGWAY

IF you look up Indiana's Gov. Mitch Daniels on YouTube, you'll find a video from late March of him sitting in a rural diner, sleeves rolled up, buttering a biscuit and relating in detail how a new, cutting-edge clean-coal plant will benefit the state. "We spend more than a billion dollars a year to pay for coal from out of state," Daniels says. As the Hoosier hunched over the lunch counter nods in agreement, Daniels methodically explains that the plant will employ a process called "coal gasification" to exploit the state's coal reserves more efficiently, creating jobs and lowering utility bills.

The video is typical of Governor Daniels: not exactly thrilling, but full of substance and detail. It's a refreshing performance in the Age of Obama, which has seen soaring rhetoric elevated over the less dramatic business of competent governance. Rather than a gift for lofty oratory, Daniels has a résumé with "technocrat" written all over it. He was the head of the Office of Management and Budget from 2001 to 2003, the CEO of the Hudson Institute think tank, a top executive at the Eli Lilly pharmaceutical company, and an aide to Sen. Richard Lugar of Indiana. It turns out that a lifetime spent learning to grasp and elucidate complicated policy and technological details is pretty good preparation for public office.

Indiana's voters seem to appreciate Daniels's careful attention to detail: The most recent poll, released on April 7—Daniels's 60th birthday—shows the governor with an approval rating of 69 percent. More telling, the same poll shows that his approval rating has climbed five points since the end of September, while nearly all the nation's other governors, Republicans and Democrats alike, saw their popularity decline with the ailing economy. And last November, as Obama became the first Democratic presidential candidate to win Indiana in 44 years and Republicans nationwide suffered an electoral bloodbath, Daniels was elected to a second term by an 18-point margin. He earned 24 percent of the Democratic vote, representing a significant crossover

MICHAEL CONROY/AP

of Obama supporters. He even won in his Democratic opponent's home county.

For those wondering how a conservative Republican governor is achieving success in the face of the prevailing political and economic headwinds, the short answer is this: Daniels has been extraordinarily successful at implementing innovative and effective public policy. His inventive, results-driven approach has been complemented by genuine fiscal discipline, and that combination has produced a dramatic turnaround for a state whose fiscal woes seemed insurmountable only a few years ago.

When Daniels became Indiana's first Republican governor in 16 years, the state was running an $800 million deficit. The financial situation was dire, but there was deep resistance to reform. "In Indiana, there are nine deadly words: 'But we have never done it that way before!'" says Richard Mourdock, Indiana's treasurer. "That's all we heard the first two and a half years: 'He wants to change everything!'"

The biggest change was dealing with Indiana's poorly managed toll road, which runs across the northern part of the state and connects Chicago to Ohio. The turnpike frequently had operated at a loss, and had generated a paltry $130 million of income above operating expenses over 50 years.

"We looked at every option," Daniels explains. "I remember starting with over 30 options. We didn't even rule out a gas-tax increase. But it was obvious to me that the single best way to do this, if we could pull it off, was what we finally did." And what they finally did was sell a 75-year lease to a European company to operate the toll road, putting $3.85 billion into Indiana's coffers in the process. Daniels called it the "Major Moves" plan.

"On the day we got the bid, I really thought this thing was so obviously in the public interest that it would not be controversial," Daniels says. "I guarantee that when I said, 'And the high bid was $3.85 *billion*,' all the air went out of the room, and people clapped their hands. At that moment there wasn't a journalist, politician, road builder, union guy—we had them all in the room—who didn't think this was going to be an absolute slam dunk." Daniels was wrong. Leasing a major thoroughfare to a foreign company was something the state had never done before. Just 14 months into his term, there was a major public outcry over the deal. But Daniels held firm as his approval rating dropped 18 points, to 37 percent.

Slowly, the public and the legislature came around to what Daniels calls the "screaming obvious business sense" of the deal—that $3.85 billion would throw off more money in interest in one year than the toll road had earned in the previous 50 years. "People still look at me and say, 'Was that a good deal?'" Mourdock says. "Yeah, I think that was a damn good deal."

MAJOR MOVES was only one part of the state's financial turnaround. Old-fashioned fiscal discipline has ensured that the state is now running a $1.3 billion budget surplus—not counting the toll-road windfall. "None of that money went to cure our budget issues," Daniels explains. "That was done with spending restraint. Like the federal government, we had a twin deficit, too: a fiscal deficit and a transportation deficit." In Indiana, transportation projects are funded separately from the general budget, with a dedicated gas tax and motor-vehicle license fees. The Major Moves money will erase the transportation segment of the state's deficit and fund major investments in public infrastructure, with $500 million set aside to generate revenue in a permanent trust.

It may throw some light on Indiana's newfound spending discipline to know that Daniels earned the nickname "The Blade" while running OMB, and he hasn't been afraid of flashing a little steel at Indiana's legislators to get drastic spending cuts. Since 2005, more than $250 million in unnecessary spending has been trimmed from state government, and $190 million was saved by renegotiating 30 state contracts. Daniels has more than halved the state's rate of spending growth, from 5.9 to 2.8 percent.

Rejecting what he calls financial "gimmickry," Daniels says that the state has now had three "honestly balanced" budgets in a row. As the governor tells it, Indiana had been "stuffing money in the side drawer—in essence postponing payments into the next fiscal year, so it looked like you were closer to balance—and raiding pension funds and things like that." In the last three years, the state has repaid $760 million to schools and local governments that had been appropriated to finance the state's deficit spending. Last year Standard & Poor's raised Indiana's credit rating to AAA for the first time.

That dislike of gimmicks is a big part of why Daniels resents the $787 billion federal stimulus bill. "There are oceans of dollars in there that have nothing to do with stimulating the economy. I recognize that stuff—it's been in David Obey's bottom drawer for 20 years. He finally got a chance to pull it out and inflict it on us," he says, referring to the Wisconsin congressman who authored the stimulus bill. Daniels recently called together state officials to outline strict accountability measures for the money from the bill that will come to Indiana.

But even with all this improvement, Indiana is not out of the economic woods. According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, the worsening economic climate means that 47 states—including Indiana, despite its current surplus—face potential budget shortfalls in the coming years. Daniels has rolled out a plan designed to keep the state in the black, including a 3 percent across-the-board spending cut for state agencies and a moratorium on pay increases for state employees. So far, he's been able to do this without raising taxes or gutting government services. On the contrary, he has overseen the creation of new state health-care initiatives, including a subsidized prescription-drug program and new health savings accounts designed to get people off of Medicaid. Indiana has added 800 child-welfare caseworkers and put 250 more state troopers on the road.

Another piece of the recovery puzzle is economic growth: Over the last two years, Indiana has attracted $15 billion in foreign investment—more than any other state—with two Toyota plants, a Honda factory, a $500 million Nestlé facility, and a British Petroleum project that will bring $3.8 billion to the state as part of an effort to harness fuel from the tar sands of western Canada.

Neil Pickett, a health-care executive in Indianapolis, says that implementation is something of an obsession with Daniels. Pickett should know: He worked with Daniels in state government, at Eli Lilly, and at the Hudson Institute. He says the governor has a gift for "leveraging what he's learned from all kinds of places to apply his knowledge in interesting ways." He also says Daniels has a wonky command of policy details down to the "granular level"—a governor who knows off the top of his head how many cars are in Indiana's state fleet.

But Daniels is an experimenter, and some of the governor's innovations might give conservatives pause. "In his first term, he

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came up with a proposal to add a surtax to people earning over $100,000 a year," says one observer close to Daniels. "Once he got into office, I think he realized the severity of the financial difficulties facing the state. And he, in his usual way, wanted to act quickly and decisively. So he made a proposal that in retrospect I think he would probably agree wasn't the best approach. He never seemed able to live that down in certain conservative circles. Cato and the *Wall Street Journal* have seemed to hold it against him in way that I think is very unfair and shortsighted." The 2008 Cato Institute Fiscal Policy Report Card on America's Governors gave Daniels a B, noting, "In his first year in office, he proposed a temporary increase in the top income tax rate."

Wonky competence goes only so far in politics, and Daniels, though far from your typical glad-handing politician, is not without a certain low-key charisma. His speeches are exceedingly well crafted and he employs his dry Midwestern wit to great effect. And Daniels has not neglected retail politicking, covering the state's 92 counties on his motorcycle, accompanied by a motor home that carries his campaign staff. That 18-point landslide last November incorporated more than the traditional GOP constituencies: Daniels is a Republican who won 20 percent of the black vote—up from 7 percent in his first election—and led in every age group, winning the under-30 vote 51–42 percent. By contrast, McCain carried just 35 percent of that age group in Indiana. Daniels won the 65-and-older demographic by a whopping 36 percentage points.

Politics is usually less ideological at the state level, but Daniels has taken care nonetheless to distinguish himself from Washington's Republican establishment. "I think we have defined the Republican party in a different way out here," he says. "I've always spoken of us as a party of purpose. If we lose our energy, if we lose our claim to be the reform party and the party of new ideas, then we'll be excused from duty. We have operated on the principle that you have to be defining the issues, and offering the next idea, and trying to force the advocates of the status quo to react to you."

But there's also a lesson in Indiana for Washington Republicans, Daniels argues. "I do think the Indiana experience of the last few years, including right now, does demonstrate that principles we have always labeled 'conservative' are still very viable. I guarantee that the principles of fiscal caution and conservatism have not gone out of style," he says. And he argues that his major reforms are conservative at their core. "Our health-care plan is health savings accounts for poor people. Our telecommunications policy is deregulation. Our infrastructure policy was the biggest privatization in state history." But he avoids using the words "conservative" and "liberal" to characterize his innovations. "We just talk about change and progress, and it happens to always be animated by a belief in limited government and the principle of freedom. But we don't express ourselves in ideological terms," Daniels says. "We try to never miss a chance to define what we're doing in terms of the least fortunate citizens or the average taxpayer. In this state, at least, it has been a formula for the only success that matters to us—real change and real results. Incidentally, we got reelected." As Michael Barone observes, "Daniels talked about 'change' in 2003 before 'change' was cool."

Daniels suggests the national Republican party has put the political cart before the policy horse—the most effective advertisements for conservative ideas are results. "I have always believed and argued measured provable performance and effective spending ought to be a goal that unites advocates of limited government and advocates of expansive government. To me, it's a completely philosophically neutral objective," he says. "If you're a committed limited-government person as I am, then I suppose it's obvious you would want to do this. But I argue to my most liberal friends: 'You ought to be the most offended of anybody if a dollar that could help a poor person is being squandered in some way.' And some of them actually agree."

Wonky competence goes only so far in politics, and Mitch Daniels, though far from your typical glad-handing politician, is not without a certain low-key charisma.

Daniels has received relatively little national attention for his work in Indiana, but his successes haven't gone entirely unnoticed. A handful of shrewd political observers, such as Michael Barone and Bill Kristol, have floated his name for higher office. But Daniels says that is off the table. His final campaign ad from last year begins with him looking straight at the camera and declaring: "Whatever your outlook on politics, here's some good news. This is the last time you'll have to watch me in an ad like this. See, governor is the only office I've run for, or ever will." And he remains firm when asked about presidential aspirations, or even about replacing his old boss, Richard Lugar, in the Senate. He responds that he still has plenty of work to do as governor: Indiana is the country's most manufacturing-intensive state, and its unemployment rate has hit double digits. Daniels says that this problem, and not the White House, is occupying his attention. "I sought to be hired for a four-year job and I'm duty-bound to do that," he adds.

Mourdock, the Indiana treasurer, is among those who would like to change Daniels's mind. The governor's skills are needed beyond Indiana, and the national Republican scene isn't exactly ablaze with rising stars. "There are a lot of us that hate that ad," Mourdock says, "and have frankly suggested to him, 'You know, the nation could use you, Mitch.'" And the governor's response? "He said, 'Richard, I thought you were a friend. No friend would ask another to do such a thing.' He's really not looking to be in the spotlight. But I ended the conversation by noting that he didn't say no." **NR**

The 'Enduring Majority'— Again

No, the Democrats will not be in power forever . . .

BY JAY COST

AFTER the Democrats' triumphs in two consecutive elections, left-wing pundits have returned to an old meme: The party's majority will be enduring. In a report published by the Center for American Progress, liberal author Ruy Teixeira boldly proclaimed: "A new progressive America has emerged with a new demography, a new geography, and a new agenda. . . . All this adds up to big change that is reshaping our country in a fundamentally progressive direction. . . . These trends will continue." Other liberals—most notably John Judis of *The New Republic* and Alan Abramowitz of Emory University—have similarly argued that Obama's election ushered in a new, enduring Democratic majority.

This essay will rebut some of the claims made by advocates of this idea. It will also offer a broader perspective on how to understand the 2008 election, and what it means for the Republican party and conservatives in the future.

What makes this task difficult is that it's hard to nail down exactly what the phrase "enduring Democratic majority" is supposed to mean. Which "progressive" policies will be passed? How much control over the government will Democrats have? For how long they will have it? Just how enduring will it be? These questions are typically left unanswered. Recently Judis commented to the *Huffington Post*: "The only circumstances that could bring back the Republicans is Obama's failure to stem the recession." This, of course, would make it indistinguishable from just about every majority in the country's history.

If this sounds like an unfalsifiable hypothesis to you, you're not alone. Judis and Teixeira floated a version of the same argument in their book *The Emerging Democratic Majority* in 2002, just a few months before the Republicans regained control of the Senate and increased their majority in the House. After the 2006 midterm election, they resurrected their thesis in an article for *The American Prospect* titled "Back to the Future" and subtitled "The re-emergence of the emerging Democratic majority." To explain away the years of GOP dominance, they invented a new psychological concept—"de-arrangement." What this means, they explained, is that

> the focus on the war on terror not only distracted erstwhile Democrats and independents but appeared to transform, or de-arrange, their political worldview. They temporarily became more sympathetic to a whole range of conservative assumptions and approaches.

This is a textbook case of special pleading. If creating an *ad hoc* concept out of whole cloth is the only way to salvage a theory, it's time to find a new theory. The concept is not particularly helpful to them, either. After all, couldn't conservatives explain away 2006 and especially 2008 with "de-arrangement"? Perhaps our cool, ultra-liberal president bewitched true Republicans with his post-partisan campaign gibberish, and these voters will soon see the error of their ways.

Ultimately, engaging with the advocates of the "enduring Democratic majority" hypothesis is like punching sand. The rules of the game are set up so that the majority is considered enduring even if a recession terminates it or it is interrupted by years of Republican governance. In other words: Heads they win, tails you lose.

It is fairly easy to get away with this kind of unrigorous thinking when you are preaching to the liberal choir. However, this argument has found its way into conservative circles, usually among pundits who blame the party's decline on a lack of attention to their favorite issue. That's misguided, because while the party has been in tough spots before, it has bounced back pretty quickly. Every time the party has suffered a setback, like 1992, it was not long before a comeback, like 1994. Even after Franklin Roosevelt swept the Democrats into office in the 1932 elections, and extended Democratic gains in 1934 and 1936, Republicans came bouncing back in 1938, returning to Capitol Hill with enough numbers to block New Deal legislation with the first of many bipartisan conservative coalitions.

Nevertheless, I sense that many conservatives think the current period in the wilderness will actually last 40 years. This feeling of dread is not a huge surprise, given the attention the "enduring Democratic majority" hypothesis has received from the iron triangle of the mainstream media, the Democratic party, and left-wing interest groups. What follows should help conservatives see that there is a lot more sizzle than steak to this idea.

AS we go through the details, it's important to keep the big picture in mind. Analysts like to talk about the movement of this or that group in the last election, but the context is of crucial importance. Voters cast their ballots last fall amid an economy that was shrinking at a 6.3 percent annual rate. This was a dramatic contraction, precipitated by a financial calamity that had struck just weeks before. Additionally, President Bush's job approval had fallen to less than 30 percent due to largely non-ideological concerns like his handling of Iraq and Hurricane Katrina. That's an unwinnable environment for any party. When you're losing, you're losing. Nothing in the data looks particularly good, but this does not

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mean the data are always going to look bad. The course of politics is not a straight line, and liberal analysts are simply wrong to assume that subsequent elections will look like the previous one.

One point often cited by proponents of the enduring-majority hypothesis is the voting preference of young Americans. There is no doubt that President Obama scored a huge victory among young voters, winning 66 percent of those under 30. Proponents think this group of voters will be important to the party's continuing success.

Perhaps—but this is the same argument we might have heard in 1972, when George McGovern lost the popular vote by 23 points but won voters aged 18 to 24 by a point. In 1976, now aged 22 to 28, this cohort voted for Jimmy Carter roughly in line with the whole country. They went slightly for Ronald Reagan in 1980, and in 1984 and 1988 the GOP had a breakthrough, as they voted for Reagan and then for George H. W. Bush at the same rate as the whole country. By 2008, these voters—most of them now in their late 50s—went for Obama by a point. Given that the whole country voted for Obama by 7 points, we'd have to conclude that they now have a Republican tilt. In other words, though this cohort of voters looked quite Democratic when they were young, the GOP won them over later, when the political pendulum swung its way again.

It's like your financial analyst's disclaimer: Past performance is no guarantee of future results. As young voters age, their lives change, and so can their politics. One big source of change is marriage. Typically, committed conservatives vote Republican and committed liberals vote Democratic, regardless of marital status. But for moderates and the non-ideological, marriage makes a big difference. In 2000 and 2004, George W. Bush did better than Al Gore and John Kerry among moderate voters of nearly all ages if they were married. The big question for the future, which advocates of the enduring-majority view cannot yet answer, is: Will young, unmarried voters follow the older cohorts and trend to the GOP after they marry, or will they stay with the Democrats? None of this is meant to minimize the significance of Obama's accomplishment in bringing young voters to his side, or the work that conservatives will have to do to win over the so-called Millennial Generation. The point is that one cannot simply extrapolate from the 2008 results.

Then there are the "professionals." This is the rather tendentious term typically applied to anybody with a graduate degree. The idea here is that these voters—driving hybrids, shopping at co-ops, hyphenating their last names, and so on—are more sympathetic to progressive views, and are solid Democrats.

Indeed they are. But so what? First of all, the fraction of "professionals" has held fairly constant since 1988, making up 16 to 18 percent of the electorate. They have consistently voted 3 to 7 more points Democratic than the rest of the nation. Given their relatively small size, they have not been decisive. They have not stopped the GOP from winning three of the last six presidential elections, or holding the House of Representatives for twelve years in a row.

It's hard to argue that there's been much of a shift along educational lines. Of all college-educated voters who voted for one of the two major parties, Obama won 53 percent. Ditto non-college voters. In 1992, Bill Clinton performed about the same across education groups, after factoring out the Perot vote: He won 53 percent of college grads and 55 percent of non-college grads. So in 16 years, not much has changed.

Those who expect an enduring Democratic majority also make much of the fact that, in a few decades, the United States will be a minority-majority nation, with whites making up less than half the population. Whether or not this is true, I can say that they tend to overstate the consequences of the underlying trend.

Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Young voters age, their lives change, and so can their politics.

Let's start with black voters. There is no doubt Obama performed very well with them. Typically, the GOP wins about 10 percent of the black vote. In 2008, John McCain won just 4 percent. Obama also brought an unprecedented number of black Americans to the polls. Last year, blacks actually constituted a larger share of the electorate than they do of the population as a whole.

The critical question, as yet unanswerable, is whether these numbers can be sustained. Is this a "personal" vote for Obama, or the beginning of a new trend? It is too soon to say. Nevertheless, we can say that the GOP's performance with blacks has been horrible. George W. Bush won only 26 percent of self-identified *conservative* blacks in 2004. In other words, black Americans who are ideologically sympathetic to the GOP still vote heavily Democratic. The Republicans need to work on this. Minimally, they should strive to make black conservatives comfortable voting for the conservative party.

Hispanics are another matter, though you can't tell that to most advocates of the enduring-majority hypothesis. In a recent article, Abramowitz—arguing that demographic trends will favor the Democrats for decades—allocated white conservatives to the GOP and white liberals to the Democrats, and predicted that white moderates would be swing voters. He then allocated *all* ethnic and racial minorities to the Democrats. This must have come as a shock to the 3.67 million Hispanics who voted for McCain last year. They are a testament to the fact that Hispanic voters cannot be viewed through the same lens as black voters. In fact, they have recently behaved more like white voters, breaking for the party that is closer to their ideology. George W. Bush won 69 percent of Hispanic conservatives and 41 percent of Hispanic moderates in 2004. He did better than any previous Republican by winning about 40 percent of all Hispanics.

Hispanics swung against McCain in 2008, but the Arizona senator still won the same share as George H. W. Bush did in 1988, even though the latter ran in a much more favorable political climate. Additionally, McCain did better than Gerald Ford in 1976 and Bob Dole in 1996. In other words, Hispanics have slowly become more Republican in recent cycles. To place them in the Democratic column so confidently is to ignore this, as well as Bush's breakthrough in 2004. But maybe these deviations can be chalked up to de-arrangement, too.

Nevertheless, conservatives must make outreach to Hispanics a priority—especially if they want to win states such as Nevada, Colorado, and New Mexico. Even though Bush did better with Hispanic conservatives than with black conservatives, too many still "defected" to Kerry. Obama probably won many more Hispanic conservatives, so there is a lot of work to be done. Abramowitz and other Democrats might be content to overlook Bush's performance among Hispanics, but conservatives should not overlook Obama's.

Finally, any discussion about the burgeoning minority vote favoring the Democrats must acknowledge that the GOP has done better with white voters in recent decades. No Democrat has won a majority of whites since Lyndon Johnson in 1964, although Jimmy Carter came close in 1976. Bill Clinton nearly won a plurality in 1992 and 1996. Yet Al Gore lost the white vote to George W. Bush by twelve points in 2000, and Bush improved among whites in 2004, winning 58 percent despite a tough war in Iraq and weak job growth after the 2001 recession. This was about the same share his father pulled in 1988, though the elder Bush had the benefit of running on years of peace and job-creating prosperity.

John McCain won 55 percent of the white vote, the largest share ever to go to a losing presidential candidate, even though President Bush was hugely unpopular and the country was plummeting into a deep recession. Part of McCain's success with whites was probably due to hesitation among some to vote for a black candidate; just as Obama may have won some votes because of his race, he may have lost others. Still, the 2008 result fits with a trend we have seen for 40 years. Whereas Carter and Clinton won Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Tennessee, and West Virginia thanks to strong showings among white voters, those voters have since flocked to the Republican party, pushing these states out of reach for the Democrats, even in years that favor their party as heavily as 2008 did.

This migration of whites to the GOP has helped counter the advantage the Democrats might otherwise have enjoyed from demographic changes. The net effect of all this has been imperceptible to date. Compare the election of 2008 with the last time the Democrats took the White House, in 1992. That year, the Democrats nominated a fresh-faced, 40-something governor promising change amid a weak economy and an unpopular incumbent named Bush. He won 53.5 percent of the two-party vote and 370 Electoral College votes. In 2008, they nominated a fresh-faced, 40-something senator promising change amid a weak economy and an unpopular incumbent named Bush. He won 53.7 percent of the two-party vote and 365 Electoral College votes.

Ultimately, the increasing share of non-whites in the population might tip the scales to the Democrats, as proponents of the enduring-majority hypothesis suggest. But that claim rests on the assumption that the GOP will not match their gains with equal improvements among whites and Hispanics. In other words, those partial to the "enduring Democratic majority" hypothesis are arguing *for* the continuation of some recent trends but *against* the continuation of others.

The migration of whites to the GOP has helped counter the advantage the Democrats might otherwise have enjoyed from demographic changes.

THE comparison between 1992 and 2008 is instructive. From a certain perspective, they are extremely similar: a weak economy, an unpopular incumbent, and so on. The top-line numbers look identical—but underneath them are dramatically different voting coalitions. What conclusions can we draw from this?

First, voting coalitions are in flux. This is the principal reason to question the "enduring Democratic majority" hypothesis—it rests on the false assumption that the parties' electorates are static. Voting coalitions change because the parties work to change them. In 2000 Governor Bush surveyed President Clinton's voting coalition and realized that it was vulnerable in several spots. He exploited those vulnerabilities in his race against Clinton's vice president, Al Gore. Eight years later, Senator Obama found weaknesses in Bush's coalition that he could exploit in his race against Senator McCain. This process is not unique. Each successful challenger finds marginal voters on the other side who can be persuaded to switch. The fact that Obama did this does not mean that the 200-year process is somehow at an end. It means that it is continuing.

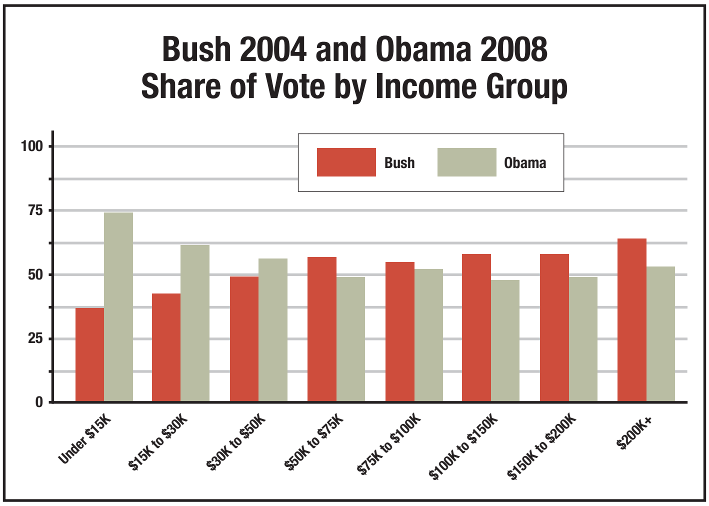
This is precisely what we should expect from two broad-based political parties whose objective is to acquire power in our diverse republic: The losers will adapt to the new environment, and the winners will have trouble keeping their voters in the fold. Governing coalitions are stitched together around limited, common goals, and as politicians achieve those goals the coalitions unravel. How was it, for instance, that high earners voted Democratic in 2008? One reason was the GOP's 1980s cuts in tax rates. Those tax cuts have long since come to be taken for granted, removing an issue for the party and thus making it a victim of its own success.

Defeating the party of an unpopular incumbent is the easy part. The hard part is governing to the satisfaction of a majority coalition—which the Democrats have not yet done.

Holding his coalition together could be real trouble for Obama. It remains to be seen whether the people who voted for him can be united around some positive goals, or whether they simply voted against Bush and the recession. Candidate Obama was adept at obfuscation during the campaign, trying hard to be all things to all people, but you can't do that when you're actually running the government; you have to decide who wins and who loses.

Michael Barone has noted that Obama has a top-bottom voting coalition, which could be unstable. The accompanying chart makes that clear.

The core of Bush's support came from middle earners, with a tilt toward the upper end. Obama's electorate, on the other hand, samples heavily from the poles. This presents an obvious policy problem. The president is promising large increases in government benefits, which will go mostly to lower-income voters. How to pay for it? Heavy tax increases on high earners will damage him among his upper-income voters. If he raises taxes too many times, the wealthy suburbs around Philadelphia and D.C. will suddenly start trending red again. So what to do? It seems the president's solution is $1 trillion budget deficits from here to eternity. Will the middle tolerate that? Those who earn between $50,000 and $100,000 per year were not terribly partial to Obama last November—and their incomes are such that they are already sacrificing important goals as they balance their family budgets. How will they react when they see Obama abandoning the last pretenses of fiscal discipline?


Bush 2004 and Obama 2008
Share of Vote by Income Group

SOURCE: NATIONAL EXIT POLLS

In the final analysis, I'd suggest that the "enduring Democratic majority" theory consists of a few good ideas surrounded by a lot of wind. The liberals who offer it are honest and well intentioned, but their enthusiasm has gotten the best of them. Their thesis appears to be impervious to falsifying evidence. Its empirical claims are overstated and offered without appropriate context. It fails to take into account American electoral history, in particular how and why the parties have shared power over time and why we can expect that to continue into the future. Conservatives should focus on finding a way back to the majority, and ignore those who say it can't be done. **NR**

Dunce Cap-and-Trade

The Waxman-Markey global-warming bill cannot survive cost-benefit analysis.

BY JIM MANZI

Democrats in the White House and Congress are now making the most serious push ever for legislation to force reductions of U.S. carbon-dioxide emissions. The stated purpose is to reduce potential future harm from human-caused climate change, and the vehicle is a climate-and-energy bill commonly referred to as Waxman-Markey. But the reasoning behind this proposal is innumerate, even if we accept the scientific and economic assumptions of its advocates.

According to the authoritative U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), under a reasonable set of assumptions for global economic and population growth, the world should expect to warm by about 2.8°C over the next century. Also according to the IPCC, a global increase in temperature of 4°C should cause the world to lose about 3 percent of its economic output. So if we do not take measures to ameliorate global warming, the world should expect to be about 3 percent poorer sometime in the 22nd century than it otherwise would be. This is very far from the rhetoric of global destruction. Because of its geographical position and mix of economic activities, the United States is expected to experience no net economic costs from such warming through the end of this century, and to begin experiencing net costs only thereafter.

A government program to force emissions reductions to avoid some of these potential future losses would impose a cost of its own: the loss in consumption we would experience if we used less energy, substituted higher-cost sources of energy for fossil fuels, and paid for projects—which are termed "offsets"—to ameliorate the effect of emissions (an example would be planting lots of trees). It's complicated to estimate the cost of an emissions-reduction program, but the leading economists in this area generally agree that it would be large, and that we should simply let most emissions happen, because it would be more expensive to avoid them than to accept the damage they would cause. This makes sense, if you consider that most such plans (for example, Waxman-Markey) call for eliminating something like 80 percent of carbon emissions within the next 40 years or so. Even if the economy becomes more efficient over this period, such a quick transition away from our primary fossil-fuel sources will be expensive.

If a) the total potential benefit of emissions abatement is about 3 percent of economic output more than 100 years from now, b) we can avoid only some of this damage, and c) it's expensive

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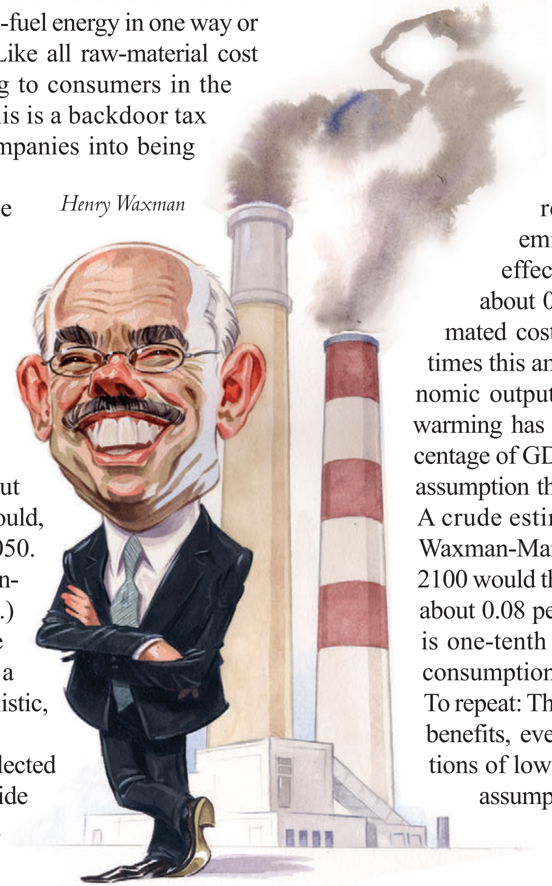
to prevent those emissions that we can prevent, the net benefit of emissions reduction will likely be a very small fraction of total economic output. William Nordhaus, who heads the widely respected environmental-economics-modeling group at Yale, estimates the total expected net benefit of an optimally designed, implemented, and enforced global program to be equal to the present value of about 0.2 percent of future global economic consumption. In the real world of domestic politics and geostrategic competition, it is not realistic to expect that we would ever have an optimally designed, implemented, and enforced global system, and the side deals made to put in place even an imperfect system would likely have costs that would dwarf 0.2 percent of global economic consumption. The expected benefits of emissions mitigation do not cover its expected costs. This is the root reason that proposals to mitigate emissions have such a hard time justifying themselves economically.

THE mechanism for mitigation proposed in the Waxman-Markey bill is a "cap and trade" plan. The idea is quite simple: The government sets a fixed annual limit to total carbon-dioxide emissions and distributes ration cards for the right to emit a portion of this amount (that's the "cap"); it also allows those who receive ration cards to sell them (that's the "trade"). Now, "distributes" is an artfully chosen word: How would the government decide who gets the ration cards? One method is to sell them; another is to give them away, theoretically based on some objective criterion such as historical emissions, but in practice more likely based on campaign contributions. Waxman-Markey doesn't specify how the distributing is to be accomplished. The Obama administration expects to sell ration cards, bringing the government $80 billion a year in revenue over the next decade. This revenue represents a cost increase for more or less any company that uses lots of fossil-fuel energy in one way or another (i.e., most of the economy). Like all raw-material cost increases, these will be passed along to consumers in the form of higher prices. So in reality this is a backdoor tax on energy that conscripts private companies into being collection agents.


Henry Waxman

DARREN GYGI

Would these costs be justified by the benefits we could expect Waxman-Markey to create? No, for the reasons outlined above.

Let's start with the costs. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has done the first cost estimate for Waxman-Markey. It finds that by 2020 Waxman-Markey would cause a typical U.S. household to consume about $160 less per year than it otherwise would, and about $1,100 less per year by 2050. (This projection does not factor in potential benefits from avoiding warming.) That doesn't sound like the end of the world, but this cost estimate is based on a number of assumptions that are unrealistic, to put it mildly.

First, it assumes that every dollar collected by selling the right to emit carbon dioxide will be returned to taxpayers through rebates or lowered taxes. Waxman-Markey establishes this intention but doesn't describe how it would be achieved, which reflects the political difficulty of achieving it. Second, it assumes no costs for enforcement and other compliance measures. Third, it assumes that large numbers of cheap emissions credits from foreign countries will be available for purchase; without these, costs to our domestic companies would be far higher. Fourth, it assumes that the rest of the world will begin similar carbon-reduction programs. (Lack of such foreign action would either increase U.S. costs or risk a trade war if we tried to compensate for lack of international cooperation with targeted tariffs.) Fifth, it assumes that there will be no exemptions, free ration cards, or other side deals—that is, no economic drag created by the kind of complexity that has attached to every large, long-term revenue-collection program in history.

The EPA forecast is something like an estimate of what would happen in a laboratory, under ideal conditions; in the real world, expected costs are far above 0.8 percent of economic consumption by 2050. The EPA does not forecast costs beyond 2050.

REMEMBER that the U.S. should not expect any net economic damage from global warming before 2100. That is, the bill's benefits would accrue to U.S. consumers—who are also bearing its costs—sometime in the next century. The EPA underestimate has costs rising from zero to 0.8 percent of consumption between now and 2050, and offers no projection beyond that year; but to what level would costs rise over the more than 50 years between 2050 and the point in the 22nd century when we might actually expect some net economic losses from global warming? The answer is likely to be much higher than 0.8 percent of consumption.

Now consider the potential benefits, of which neither the EPA nor the bill's sponsors have produced an estimate. Climatologist Chip Knappenberger has applied standard climate models to project that, under the scenario for global economic and population growth referenced above, Waxman-Markey's emissions reductions would have the net effect of lowering global temperatures by about 0.1°C by 2100. Remember that the estimated cost of a 4°C increase in temperature (40 times this amount) is about 3 percent of global economic output. Assume for the moment that global warming has the same impact on the U.S. as a percentage of GDP as it does on the world as a whole (an assumption that exaggerates the impact on the U.S.). A crude estimate of the U.S. economic costs that Waxman-Markey would avoid sometime later than 2100 would then be about one-fortieth of 3 percent, or about 0.08 percent of economic output. This number is one-tenth of 0.8 percent, the EPA's estimate of consumption loss from Waxman-Markey by 2050. To repeat: The costs would be more than ten times the benefits, even under extremely unrealistic assumptions of low costs and high benefits. More realistic assumptions would make for a comparison far less favorable to the bill.

I've had to rely on informal studies and back-of-envelope calculations to do this cost/benefit analysis. Why haven't advocates and sponsors of the proposal done their own? Why are they urging Congress to make an incredible commitment of resources without even cursory analysis of the economic consequences? The answer should be obvious: This is a terrible deal for American taxpayers.

One potential objection to my analysis is that the bill is part of a global drive for all countries to reduce emissions, and that the U.S. needs to "show leadership." By this logic, we should ascribe much larger benefits to the Waxman-Markey bill—specifically, the benefits to American consumers of the whole world's engaging in similar programs. There are two obvious problems with this argument, however. First, ascribing all of the benefits of a global deal to reduce emissions to a specific bill that does not create such a commitment on the part of any other countries is loading the dice. The benefit we should ascribe to the bill is rather that of an increase in the odds of such a global deal. But would Waxman-Markey actually increase them, or might it decrease them instead? Whenever one nation sacrifices economic growth in order to reduce emissions, the whole world can expect to benefit, because future temperature should decrease for the entire globe. Every nation's incentive, therefore, is to free ride on everybody else. Our most obvious leverage with other emitting nations would be to offer to reduce our emissions if they reduced theirs. Giving up this leverage and hoping that our unilateral reductions would put moral pressure on China, Russia, Brazil, and similar countries to reduce their emissions reveals a touchingly sunny view of human nature, but it is a poor negotiating strategy. Second and more fundamentally, even if the whole world were to enact similar restraints on emissions, the economics would still not be compelling, for the reasons outlined at the beginning of this article.

A second potential objection to my analysis is that we owe it to the rest of the world to limit our emissions because of our historical role as an emitter. What this ignores is that the reason the U.S. and Europe have historically emitted carbon dioxide is that they invented the modern economy. Along with putting all that carbon dioxide in the air, the West invented the polio vaccine, the limited-liability corporation, the high-efficiency power turbine, and so on. It invented, that is, the tools for creating wealth that successful parts of the developing world are now using to escape poverty—and, incidentally, to emit more carbon dioxide. It is less than obvious why we should put a special burden on the West to make reparations for carbon-dioxide emissions while ignoring the fact that the net global effect of the system that created these emissions has been extremely positive. Ask yourself this question: Would you rather be born at the median income level in Bangladesh today, or at the median income level in Bangladesh in an alternative world in which the entire Northern Hemisphere never escaped life at the subsistence level—that is, to live in a world of lower carbon emissions, but no science, no hospitals, no foreign aid, and no meaningful chance of changing the material conditions of your life? If advocates of Waxman-Markey intend it to be, in effect, an increase of $80 billion per year in spectacularly inefficient foreign aid for people yet to be born in equatorial regions of the globe, they should at least be clear about this.

A third and more serious potential objection to my analysis is that while Waxman-Markey may not create benefits if the projections I offered above turn out to be accurate, climate science is highly inexact, and the bill is an insurance policy against higher-than-expected costs. Now, climate and economics modelers aren't idiots, so it's not as though this hadn't occurred to them. Competent modelers don't assume only the most likely case, but build probability distributions for levels of warming and associated economic impacts (e.g., there is a 5 percent chance of 4.5°C warming, a 10 percent chance of 4.0°C warming, and so on). The economic calculations that compose, for example, the analysis by William Nordhaus that I cited earlier are executed in just this manner. So the possibility of "worse than expected" impacts means, more precisely, the possibility of "impacts worse than those derived from our current probability distribution." That is, we are concerned here with the inherently unquantifiable possibility that our entire probability distribution is wrong.

The costs of Waxman-Markey would be more than ten times the benefits, even under extremely unrealistic assumptions of low costs and high benefits.

THIS concept has been called, somewhat grandiosely, the "precautionary principle." Once you get past all the table-pounding, this is the crux of the argument for emissions abatement. It is an emotionally appealing political position, as it easy to argue that we should oppose some consumption now to head off even a low-odds possibility of disaster.

But this is to get lost in the world of single-issue advocates and become myopic about risk. We face lots of other unquantifiable threats of at least comparable realism and severity. A regional nuclear war in central Asia, a global pandemic triggered by a modified version of the HIV virus, and a rogue state weaponizing genetic-engineering technology all come immediately to mind. Any of these could kill hundreds of millions of people. Scare stories are meant to be frightening, but we shouldn't become paralyzed by them.

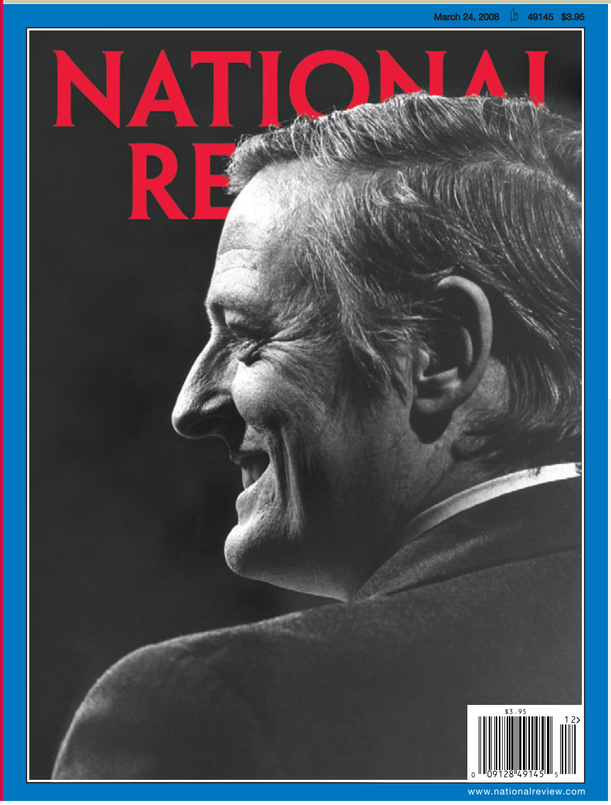
In the face of massive uncertainty on multiple fronts, the best strategy is almost always to hedge your bets and keep your options open. Wealth and technology are raw materials for options, and a much more sensible strategy to deal with climate risk would emphasize technology rather than taxes. The role for the U.S. federal government is to fund prediction, mitigation, and adaptation strategies.

The danger here, of course, is that we may end up back in the failed game of industrial policy. The federal government, after all, was the key sponsor of, for example, the shale-oil and large-scale-wind-turbine debacles in response to the energy crisis 30 years ago. Setting the right scope for such a program and managing the funding process carefully would be essential, to prevent it from becoming corporate welfare.

Government investments should meet specific criteria: They should be related to detecting or ameliorating the effects of global warming, serve a public rather than a private need, and provide no obvious potential source of profit to investors if successful. Examples would include improved global-climate-prediction capability, biotechnology to capture and recycle carbon-dioxide emissions, and geo-engineering projects to change the albedo of the earth's surface or atmosphere. In contrast, most technologies that would contribute to the ongoing long-run transition of the economy away from fossil fuels, such as more efficient fuel cells for autos or lower-cost solar-power sources, need no government funding, since there is ample profit motive to develop them. Massive amounts of venture funding and large-company internal capital allocations are flowing to these opportunities right now. Government attempts to direct such development would almost certainly destroy value through political allocation of resources.

The agency for funding any government-sponsored research should be explicitly modeled on the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). It should have a very-high-IQ staff with wide flexibility in providing small grants, and emphasize large prizes for accomplishing measurable and audacious goals. The British entrepreneur Richard Branson has offered a $25 million prize to anyone who demonstrates a device that removes significant amounts of carbon from the atmosphere. What if the U.S. government upped the ante to $1 billion and pledged to make any resulting technology freely available to the world? That would solve any global-warming problem that might develop, at a one-time cost of less than 0.01 percent of U.S. GDP. Of course, this agency would still be a government program, and therefore rife with inefficiencies. But consider that its costs would be on the order of 1/100th of the costs of imposing a large U.S. carbon tax.

Clarity about costs and benefits is the enemy of the Waxman-Markey proposal. To get drawn into the details of tweaking allowance schedules or emissions limits, in the hope of avoiding the appearance of obstructionism, is a sucker play. No amount of tinkering is going to change the fundamental reality that even a perfect implementation of the Waxman-Markey concept is a very poor economic deal for Americans. The alternative should not be tax-based or rationing-based efforts to make energy more expensive, but a targeted research program to provide insurance against unanticipated and unpredictable consequences. At the other extreme, to make this an argument about climate science by attacking the global scientific establishment, or to engage in a debate about worldviews and socialism—that is, to operate on a high rhetorical plane—is also a sucker play, because it allows advocates of Waxman-Markey to continue to avoid the hard issue of costs and benefits. We should keep coming back to one practical question: What do we pay, and what do we get? **NR**



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Performance Art And Panache

Remembering editorial conferences with William F. Buckley Jr.

BY RICHARD BROOKHISER

In 1976, when I was 21 years old, I went to work for National Review as a summer intern. In-house, the internships were called Miss Buckley's Finishing School for Young Ladies and Gentlemen, after Priscilla Buckley, Bill's sister and the managing editor. Vicki Marani, a Yalie a few years ahead of me, was one of the ladies who had recently passed through it; she told me about the position and urged me to apply for it. I got the nod, and after Memorial Day my parents drove me to the city and installed me at a midtown YMCA.

National Review's offices were on East 35th Street, on the southeast slope of Murray Hill, a neighborhood that was a staid mix of apartment buildings and brownstones, hotels and clubs. Up the street was a Swedenborgian church with rose of Sharon in its front yard. National Review occupied several floors of a pre-war building mostly converted to offices. The apartment-style layout made its premises crabbed and eccentric (the flattering term was Dickensian). Bill Buckley valued the unusually high number of bathrooms; he said he didn't want to "cross a proscenium" to relieve himself. My first day was an editorial Monday, the beginning of the end of the biweekly production cycle. The cover was done, all the articles, columns, and reviews set in type. Only "The Week" remained to be assigned and written. I arrived wearing a light-blue polyester summer suit and was given a desk in the main editorial office on the second floor, then followed everyone to the third for the editorial conference.

On the way we passed Bill's office, a dark den with a red carpet. An enormous illuminated globe sat in one corner. The flat surfaces were stacked with papers and books, the walls covered with plaques he had been awarded and cartoons of which he was the subject. A metal gizmo on his desk waved three small flags when you turned the crank. He typically sat in the window in a swivel chair, in the angle between his desk and a small table that supported his typewriter. When he was on the phone with a friend he stuck his legs up and leaned back happily. There was a dumbwaiter in the corner behind him that went down to Priscilla's office on the floor below; when she had copy to send up to him, she would ring a bell by pressing the head of a small bronze turtle. Even hurrying past on day one, I registered a few of these details avidly.

The editorial conference was held in the library, lined with built-in shelves and almost filled by a heavy black rectangular table. I sat at the bottom. Some of the people I knew; I had met Bill and William Rusher, the publisher, and corresponded with Priscilla. A few of the others I recognized by name, particularly James Burnham, who sat near the head of the table next to Bill. The names of the rest passed in a blur. The purpose of the conference was to decide what the magazine should cover in its unsigned, corporate voice in "The Week." Bill Rusher, at Bill's left, made a few terse suggestions and departed. Then everyone else gave his ideas, starting with Burnham on Bill's right, and moving counterclockwise. I quickly learned that everyone more or less showed off for Bill, except Burnham and Priscilla, who didn't have to, and Rusher, who had made a separate peace. When we finished, Bill assigned each topic to a writer, consulting the scratchings—he frequently asked Priscilla what it was that he had written—of his notes. To me he assigned a labor-union matter, items on Chile and Cambodia, and the obituary of a historian I had never heard of. He ended the meeting by lightly slapping the table and saying, "Entonces" (Spanish for "Well, then"). We returned to our desks to start writing.

This article is adapted from Right Time, Right Place: Coming of Age with William F. Buckley Jr. and the Conservative Movement, *forthcoming from Basic Books.*

The editorial staff worked on the second floor. At each desk there was a Royal Standard manual typewriter, gray, serious, and solid, noble Industrial Age artifacts; the patter of the keys striking the cylinder made anything written on them seem urgent, even a thank-you note; you could have thrown one out the second-floor window onto the sidewalk, and it would still have pecked away. I was told I would be getting clips from the research library, a three-man staff in yet another office: articles cut from the major newspapers, the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Wall Street Journal*. But before I had set to work, I was asked to lunch.

The writers and editors, led by Bill, walked around the corner to Nicola Paone's. My notions of fine dining were defined at that point by 19th-century inns in the countryside around Rochester where we drove for Sunday dinners after church. This was a fancy meal in the middle of a workday, an unheard-of extravagance—unheard of by me, at any rate. We were seated at a large round table in the main room by Franco, the gray-suited maître d' with a gold wrist chain. Mr. Paone, older, courtlier, more ethnic, described his specials as if he were reciting poetry; he described his desserts like lovers. He had given the regular dishes on his menu whimsical names—Nightgown, Boom-boom—which my colleagues all seemed to know. Even in 1976, Paone's was old-fashioned. All the elements of the meal supported each other like acrobats in a pyramid; the wine lubricated the food, dessert topped it off, coffee cut the dessert and the wine. Bill presided, never letting the conversation flag (a skill, I would discover, that is not common). The process took an hour and a half. I was back at my Royal Standard in mid-afternoon, without having turned to Chile or the late historian.

Then one of my new colleagues, Joe Sobran, strolled into my office and gave me something else to think about. Joe was a dark-haired, bearish young man with a deep voice and a sweet smile; he was probably smoking one of the short cigars he was so fond of. I knew his byline well—he had written the critique of Garry Wills that accompanied the papal Huey Newton cover, and many other pieces besides. He had been assigned to go to Yankee Stadium that night to see if there was anything interesting in a rally of the Unification Church, but couldn't make it. Would I like to go in his stead? He loaned me his press card and gave me directions.

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An editorial conference in 1972 (from left: Priscilla Buckley, WFB, James Burnham)

I had not been on a subway since I had taken the Flushing Line to the 1964 World's Fair with my parents; happily, Yankee Stadium was a straight shot north from Grand Central. The Unification Church, which was just making a splash in the United States, was a pseudo-Christian religion built around its founder, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, a Korean evangelist who claimed to be the Messiah (Jesus had failed; Moon would get it right). The Moonies were accused of brainwashing their converts. They wanted a big-deal rally to show how mainstream they were; their enemies seized on the occasion to condemn them. The Moonies had taken over a moribund orchestra, the New York City Symphony, which sat on the infield playing classical repertoire. There were speeches, almost incomprehensible through the sound system and the Korean accent. At one point anti-Moonies broke through security and scuffled with the crowd in the seats. Coming and going, I found myself in a religious Reichstag of protesters—evangelicals insisting that Jesus was Lord, Catholics who believed that the Virgin Mary had appeared in Bayside. I took copious notes, and wrote up the story when I got back to my YMCA cubicle, on my own portable typewriter. I supplied background by reading the leaflets pro and con that had been thrust at me, and the clips supplied by the research library; I wrote the story by opening my eyes. The next day Priscilla told me they could slip the account into the magazine as a one-page article.

I made a hash of the historian; Bill ended up writing the obit himself, since he had actually known the man. But the editorial on Cambodia worked. A French Jesuit, Fr. François Ponchaud, based in Cambodia, had reported the first accounts of refugees fleeing the Khmer Rouge; the victorious Communists, it appeared, had murdered several hundred thousand people. Father Ponchaud's estimates turned out to be on the low side. All I did was retell the story; the thing spoke for itself. Years later, the soundman on a documentary I was hosting came to a shoot wearing a remarkable T-shirt: It showed the cartoon character Tintin creeping through jungle vines toward a pile of skulls. The caption read: "Tintin's Adventure in the Cambodian Forest." I asked where he had gotten such a monstrous thing. In Cambodia itself, he said; sick jokes were the only way the people could deal with what they had been through, and with the presence, even after the fall of the Khmer Rouge, of the perpetrators, living freely among them.

"The Week" went to bed at five o'clock on Wednesday afternoon. Attendance was not mandatory at the closing, but it too was a public occasion, this time a performance by Bill, with some help from his sister. Bill believed in overassigning, so he always had twice as much copy as there was space to fill. That was fine, because it gave him leeway to select and shape. All the editorials were gathered in a sheaf; the paragraphs were spread out, page by page, on the conference-room table and the counters of the bookshelves. Priscilla told him how many lines were available for "The Week." Bill marked the total on his adding machine, a Swiss contraption that looked like a black pepper shaker. He made a final cut of the editorials, arranging them in order—foreign, domestic, offbeat—and noting the line count. Then he prowled the room, eliminating paragraphs by turning them face-down. Priscilla, who also had the power to kill a paragraph, did the same, calling out the length of each victim. As the losers fell by the wayside, Bill kept a running tally on his pepper shaker of how close he was to the final target. When he was within a line or two, he arranged the surviving paragraphs in the same order as the editorials, asking himself, "Where's my lead?" as he did so. The lead paragraph had to be funny, sharp, startling; it was often written by Joe. The whole show, maybe 15 minutes long, was performance art, laying mosaic at the speed of hit-and-run. When he was done, he handed the batch to Priscilla and joined us for drinks, which appeared from a cabinet in the corner, or went off to his next gig.

Every magazine and newspaper holds conferences, and all of them edit, but I couldn't imagine any doing it with such panache. **NR**

The Long View

BY ROB LONG

Ask Nancy Pelosi

The Speaker of the House responds to your questions.

Dear Nancy:

I'm a long-time reader, first-time writer. I've loved your work in the House of Representatives and have been reading your column for years.

My husband and I are having a big argument. Last year, we attended the wedding of the daughter of close friends. We've known this girl for years. Last month, she announced that she and her husband of eleven months are divorcing.

My husband feels that since the marriage lasted less than a year, we should expect to get that gift back. I say, what's done is done. We've both agreed to follow your advice. Nancy, what do you think?

Re-Gifting in Greenville

Dear Re-Gifting:

Wait a minute. What?

I mixed up here. Hold on. Hold on.

I honestly . . . I mean, what are you asking me? What is this? Do I think you should what? I'm at a loss as to what you're saying and why you're accusing me of this kind of thing.

You shouldn't be asking me these questions. I'm not on trial here. You are. You and your husband. You've both lied many times before—lied and deceived and dissembled—just like you're doing now.

Was there even a wedding gift? Was there even a wedding? Was there a family friend? I don't know the answer to these questions.

But the answer to these questions is undoubtedly "no."

What do I think? I think about people without health care. People without jobs. With skin problems caused by global warming, which I'm leading the fight against, by the way. With returning America's sense of decency and leadership. That's what I think.

Shame on you. Shame on you.

Does that answer your question?

Dear Nancy:

In the past year, I've lost about 60 pounds. And the hard way, too!! Through diet and exercise and willpower (love those Lorna Doones!). I've managed to drop the weight and keep it off.

Lately, though, I've noticed a coldness from my husband. He's always been basically supportive, but since the weight has come off he's been acting strangely distant. I can't figure it out. I thought he'd love the new, slimmer me, but the truth is, he keeps pulling away. How should I handle this?

Svelte but Stumped

Dear Svelte:

In 2002 or around there, I was present at a meeting . . . wait. The pages are out of order here. I'm getting mixed up.

I'm mixed up.

The pages are . . . they're all . . . wait, okay? Can you wait? Can you just WAIT? For ONE second please??

Okay.

You're fat. I'm not fat. I never was fat, and anyone who says I was is a liar, it's that simple. You're a liar. A fat—or formerly fat, though we only have your word for it—liar. A big formerly fat liar. I hope you're proud of yourself.

Look, I have a lot on my mind. I'm worried about terrorism. I'm worried about the economy. I'm fighting a war in Iraq. I'm a busy person. I can't be expected to remember every little thing.

Maybe your husband is upset that you lied about what you said to me. Because you did, you know.

Wait. I'm mixed up here. These things are all out of order. Let me put these pages back in order.

Okay, all fixed.

Sorry, what was your question?

Dear Nancy:

It's after Memorial Day!!! That means white shoes are okay, right? But where I live, it's hardly spring yet—still chilly and rainy and windy. So my friend Tina says, even though it's after Memorial Day, white shoes are still inappropriate. She insists that I need to wait until the weather is nice and sunny. I say, forget about it! What do you say, Nancy?

White Shoe in Walla Walla

Dear White Shoe:

You're purposely trying to trick me. You're purposely trying to confuse me.

The rule is, white shoes after Memorial Day. That's the rule. I didn't make the rule and I wasn't there when anyone talked about it.

Why are we playing "Gotcha"? Why are we playing that? Who are you to ask me these questions? Stop it. Just stop it.

These are . . . these are big issues. I'm trying to answer them as completely as I can. But at the same time, I know that my enemies are lying in wait, just waiting to destroy the first female speaker of the House of Representatives over something like that.

You know who the real villain is?

Vice President Dick Cheney. He's the real villain. Him and Karl Rove. They're the villain. Villains. You should be turning the spotlight onto them, instead of hounding me with your complicated questions.

Is the rule Memorial Day? Is it? I don't know, honestly. I only have your word for that. Show me something on paper. Show me something definitive and then I'll answer your questions.

Wait. I'm all confused here.

I'm mixed up.

Does that answer your question?

Books, Arts & Manners

Of Beauty And Loss

TOM SHIPPEY

Late in 1914 four young Englishmen, just out of school, met and decided it was their mission to reform their country morally, through poetry. The odds of this quixotic enterprise's success were ludicrously long to begin with, and they soon got worse. Within two years, two of the four were dead in Flanders. The third survived, abandoned the mission, and lived a normal life. The fourth became the most-read English-language poet of the 20th century, and his name was J. R. R. Tolkien.

This assertion would induce apoplexy in many a member of the Modern Language Association. "Most-read poet? What about Seamus Heaney? Or Sylvia Plath? Or Maya Angelou? How can Tolkien's hobbitic doggerel and weird elvish pastiches be compared with real poetry?" Just the same, the claim may well be true, and would be even more likely if the competition were restricted to poems read for their own sake and not as part of a college requirement: Tolkien never had any help from the educational and literary establishment.

Of course, Tolkien's high score is caused entirely by his poems' being embedded in two of the most-read and best-loved prose fictions of the century, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. One famous writer of fantasy confessed that when she finished *The Lord of the Rings* she felt bereft, because there was no more of it and she knew that she would never read anything so fulfilling again. She responded by starting to write her own fiction, and she was not alone: None of the fantasy stories now crowding the bookstores entirely escapes the mark of Tolkien, and several famous sequences started in similar ways, as emulations, continuations, tributes. Tolkien seeded authors, and he also created a market.

He left a vacuum, too. There was no sequel to *The Lord of the Rings*. It soon became known that there was a prequel, on which he had been working for many years, but when he died in 1973 it had still not appeared. Yet Tolkien, slow to publish though he was, never stopped writing and rarely threw anything away. The presses have been busy ever since with posthumous works, most of them (there are now almost 30) edited by his son and literary executor, Christopher. The latest, just released, is the long poem *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 384 pp., $26).

The first was a collection of translations of Middle English poems, including "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight." The major event, however, was the appearance in 1977 of the long-awaited *The Silmarillion*. This is set in the same world as *The Lord of the Rings*, but much earlier. Parallels with the Old Testament are evident, though not dominant, and the book's "First Age" ends with a kind of divine intervention to redress the evil caused by the elvish Fall. The book has been an inspiration to many, but a disappointment to many more: It gives *The Lord of the Rings* a frame, but it is a chronicle rather than a novel, full of names and genealogies, and often deeply sad.

Tolkien's ambitions were, quite literally, epic. He was mesmerized by Norse, which was well-preserved in Finland: The complete lack of literary tradition in that country meant that oral tradition survived powerfully into the modern era. It was organized into the *Kalevala* by the 19th-century scholar Elias Lönnrot.

One of Tolkien's goals was to be the English Lönnrot—but he was going to have to create his own raw material. This accounts for the bulk of the twelve-volume *History of Middle-earth*, edited by Christopher Tolkien between 1983 and 1996, and the two-volume *History of the Hobbit*, edited in 2007 by John Rateliff. On one hand, there is a string of false starts, deeply suggestive but never completed; on the other, attempts to "write into the gap," fill in ancient non-completions. Early drafts fill up the Rateliff edition and most of the later *Middle-earth* volumes. They are for fans and scholars only, especially students of the creative process. But the first two of the twelve-volume sequence, published as *The Book of Lost Tales 1* and *2*, show Tolkien trying not only to re-create the hypothetical pagan mythology of his English ancestors, but also to harmonize it with his Christian and Catholic beliefs. He poured into these works his love of nature and his yearning for a world where life and beauty were not forever threatened—not heaven, not something spiritual, but an earthly paradise where the mallorn trees might grow.

One does not have to look very hard to see a personal motive—Tolkien lost his father when he was four, his mother at twelve, most of his friends before he got his first job—but it's a personal motive shared by anyone who understands death. His theme is not death (though that is what he himself claimed), but something broader, and that is loss: loss of tales, loss of memories, and loss of friends, but also loss of beauty and diversity. *The Lord of the Rings* ends with some of the characters confronting—to use the modern

Mr. Shippey, a scholar of medieval literature, is professor emeritus at Saint Louis University. He is the author of J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century.

POSTCARD FROM HUBBARD HALL

The actresses here
fit their parts.
Mother, daughter,
student, nurse.

This play
concerns a farm
In decline.
The barn roof collapses.
Chickens die,
mysteriously. Gwen plays
a concerned daughter.
The farmer's daughter:
You know all the jokes.

I want to act
the traveling salesman,
driving, rain-soaked,
hoping for some warm bed,
solace, the purity of
hay-scented flesh.

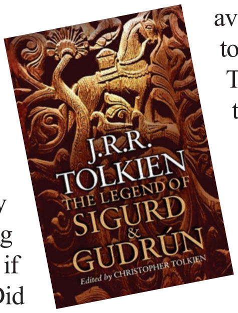
—JOSEPH MUELLER

terminology—habitat loss and species extinction.

Among the most interesting of the posthumous works is the fifth volume of "History of Middle-earth," titled *The Lost Road*. This "unfinished tale" sprang from a conversation with C. S. Lewis sometime early in 1936. At that time both men had reason to feel unfulfilled. They had put every effort into becoming poets, and had gotten nowhere. Tolkien had had a scattering of poems printed, often anonymously and always in vanishingly "little magazines." Lewis had had two collections published, which fell dead from the press. However, with astonishing resilience, they decided to change tack and write the kind of fiction they liked—since, after all, no one else was doing so. The toss of a coin gave Lewis the theme of space travel, and Tolkien time travel. The first volume of Lewis's space-fiction trilogy came out in 1938, followed by its two sequels and the seven volumes of "Narnia." But while Lewis never looked back, Tolkien got hung up. His idea seems to have been to tell a sequence of stories, set in different eras, connected by the names of the characters—which would recur disguised by the linguistic sound-changes of time—and by the theme of conflict between elf-friends and the followers of the Dark Lord. This effort survives as *The Lost Road*.

In 2007 Christopher Tolkien brought out the first fully completed Tolkien narrative since 1977, *The Children of Húrin*. This one is Tolkien's *Macbeth*, a tale of a hero driven in the end to suicide by fate, or doom, or the malignance of the Enemy. It is animated by characteristically complex thinking about what we mean by "chance." Traditional question in Oxford philosophy exams: What is a coincidence? This is Tolkien's long answer, but few will be cheered by it, for the story is unrelentingly sad.

And now, in 2009, we have *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún*—a classic case of "writing into a gap," the gap this time being the eight pages torn out of the main manuscript of Old Norse heroic poetry by some medieval vandal. Many have thought that the story of the Volsungs and the Nibelungs ought to have been the northern Homer, and there have been several attempts to re-create it, notably by Wagner. Tolkien's effort is far more professionally competent than any other version. But written in the original meter, with the kind of archaic language much more acceptable in the 1930s, when it took shape, can it too reach a modern mass audience? Or is narrative poetry too extinct a genre to revive?



Having posed the questions, one might think again about those long-dead young men, with their strangely ambitious campaign for moral reform through the power of art. One of them, G. B. Smith, dead in 1916 of gas gangrene resulting from wounds, had written to Tolkien just before his death to hope that his friend would "say the things I have tried to say long after I am not there to say them, if such be my lot" (as it was). Did he? And is their campaign now at last having some effect, through the works of the one survivor?

The Australian science-fiction author Hal Colebatch has remarked that the enormous success of works such as *The Lord of the Rings* signifies "strong popular dissent" from the cultural orthodoxy and moral relativism that "bedevil modern Western society," and this is dead right, but understated. Their success doesn't just signify that dissent; it encourages, reinforces, and perpetuates it. How much effect have they had? Their readers are numbered in the hundreds of millions, many of them by their own account deeply moved; the viewers of the Peter Jackson movies number even more (and many of them will go on to read the books); and the books are available in scores of languages. Add to that the readers of the hundreds of Tolkien-inspired works, figure in the cumulative pressure of repeated statements of a traditional heroic ethos, allow for the fact that the Tolkienian ideology is not proclaimed but embedded—any way you figure it, it comes out as a lot. Sometimes the results are evident, as in the Tolkien-derived banners displayed by young Russians who resisted the abortive Communist coup in 1991. Sometimes the results have just soaked in silently. But the four young men have certainly succeeded, beyond the grave and quite literally beyond their wildest dreams. But then, as Gandalf says, "Even the wise cannot see all ends." And, as he also says, "We must keep up our courage." **NR**

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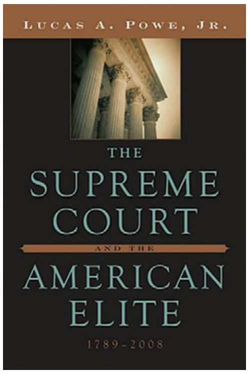

The Supreme Court and the American Elite, 1789–2008, by Lucas A. Powe Jr.
(Harvard, 432 pp., $29.95)

This brisk history of the Supreme Court's constitutional decisions contains much that is admirable and interesting. Nevertheless, the main lesson advanced by the book has been commonplace at least since the fictional saloonkeeper Mr. Dooley observed that no matter what the Constitution says, the Court follows the election returns. University of Texas professor Lucas Powe's extensive elaboration of this thesis is an indication of how depleted American attitudes toward judicial power have become.

For the most part, Powe's book provides a chronology of the Court's major decisions organized by subject area. The descriptions of the cases are brief but deftly presented and integrated into their social and political context. Powe is a companionable guide, offering comments that are often dryly humorous and insightful. Moreover, while in many ways a typical academic progressive, he displays a spiritedly independent streak. For instance, he offers a partial defense of the frequently disparaged rationale of the separate-but-equal decision, *Plessy* v. *Ferguson*; he observes that the political response to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was healthier than the reaction to the judicial edict represented by *Brown* v. *Board of Education*; and he notes that *Roe* v. *Wade*, the abortion decision, has been profoundly harmful to our politics. Powe even has something good to say about Kenneth Starr.

Nevertheless, despite the abundance of suggestive material that he draws on, Powe manages only a banal and—at that—self-contradictory theme. For the most part he echoes Mr. Dooley in arguing that the Supreme Court's constitutional decisions can be explained as reflections of majoritarian preferences, but (less often) he explains them as expressions of elite opinion. In any event, his general point is that judicial decisions can best be understood as responses to political and cultural forces. This theme is developed with the help of several more specific but very familiar kinds of observations: that the justices often vote along party lines (as in *Bush* v. *Gore*), that regional background can explain some votes, that personality and philosophy influence legal conclusions, and that positions on public policy (as opposed to positions on law) are also important. The intellectual value of this book does not reside in its endorsement of these widely accepted tenets of modern legal realism.

Nor does the book explore in any detail the many arresting questions about legal realism that are raised by the rich history that the book sails through. How, for example, do the members of the professional elite who sit on the Court know what the majority believes or prefers? Do they consult opinion surveys? Elections? Editorials? Intuition? What explains significant cases—such as the Court's decisions blocking much of the early New Deal or its invalidation of flag-desecration statutes—that frustrate intense majoritarian preferences? And what accounts for important episodes, including the post–Civil War Court's restrictions on national power, in which the party identification of the justices runs counter to constitutional outcomes?

Many other questions are raised by political explanations of the Court's behavior. To what extent are the justices aware that the legal considerations they extol in their confirmation hearings and earnestly offer in their opinions are not the real reasons for their decisions? If they are not aware, by what mechanism does it happen that outcomes that the justices believe are determined by law so often turn out to track politics? If, in contrast, the justices are aware of the salience of the political in their decision-making, are they intentionally deceiving the public when they emphasize legal explanations?

Finally and most generally, Powe's history raises the question whether the Constitution *should* be enforced in a way that reflects majoritarian political values. Why should the justices' views about public preferences trump those of the political branches at either the national or the state level?

Powe's account raises such questions, but he does not pause to pursue them in any thorough way. This is not, however, to say that Powe's history is bland or uncritical. On the contrary, like most law professors, Powe can cast a withering eye on discrete aspects of the Court's work. Consider some characterizations of the Court's record that are at least suggested by his narrative.

The iconic decision usually credited with establishing the power of the Court to set aside acts of Congress as unconstitutional, *Marbury* v. *Madison*, was authored by the revered chief justice John Marshall. But in this case Marshall was hardly impartial, since he was judging his own prior behavior as a member of the preceding administration, not to mention the behavior of his brother. Moreover, the Federalist Marshall resolved issues the Court had no jurisdiction to decide in order to expand judicial power over the Republican administration—and appears to have intentionally misconstrued a federal statute so as to avoid a political reaction to this expansion of the Court's authority.

The power to set aside laws thought to be unconstitutional has not by any means resulted in the consistent enforcement of constitutional values. For instance, during significant periods, the free-speech clause did not protect dissenters' political speech and the commerce clause did not limit congressional power.

A dizzying array of Supreme Court opinions, including famous ones, are seriously and obviously unsatisfactory as an intellectual matter. These include,

Mr. Nagel is a professor of constitutional law at the University of Colorado School of Law and the author most recently of Unrestrained: Judicial Excess and the Mind of the American Lawyer *(Transaction).*

according to Powe, *Brown* v. *Board*, *Griswold* v. *Connecticut* (on contraceptives), *Roe*, and many more. The justices have blithely overlooked obvious and fundamental problems, such as the fact that the Fourteenth Amendment, the source of most individual-rights litigation today, was enacted through coercion and military force.

Contrary to the folklore that depicts the Court as the last guardian of our legal ideals, the justices have sometimes approved significant injustices, such as the imprisonment of the socialist Eugene Debs or the forced relocation of some 112,000 people of Japanese descent during World War II, while it was the political branches that acted to correct them.

Individual justices appear to have decided cases based on personal animosities, political grievances, the hope of approbation in the press, and their allegiances in the culture wars. Important decisions may well have been based on unworthy motivations, such as getting back at an administration that had pursued policies disappointing to the justice, or avoiding the appearance of rewarding southerners for their resistance to school-desegregation decrees. Some decisions may have been based on profoundly improper motivations, such as the desire to determine the outcome of a presidential election.

Certain justices have shown stunningly broad ambitions for social reform through adjudication. Some have, for example, pursued the possibility of a constitutional right to welfare, and four justices attempted to substitute their power for the people's authority to amend the Constitution on the issue of sexual equality. The modern Court has shown a disturbing tendency to institutional megalomania, as when it declared that its interpretations of the Constitution have the same authority as the Constitution itself and when it explained that the purpose of *Roe* was to end public debate about abortion.

One might expect that Powe, having acknowledged these and other troubling aspects of the history of judicial power, would come to some conclusions more novel and pointed than that the justices tend to follow the will of the majority. In this respect, however, he is representative of many in the legal profession and the political world. Sophisticated observers of the Court certainly criticize its decisions on both intellectual and practical grounds, but they take the Court's overall role in American politics and culture as a fact of life that is not to be seriously reconsidered.

This complacency rests on the thinnest of rationalizations. Many on the left, like Powe, see the Court as being (in the main) politically responsive, a characteristic that somehow washes away a multitude of sins. Others, mainly but not exclusively on the left, convince themselves that the justices, whatever their deficiencies, perform essential high-level functions, such as injecting moral deliberation into the political system or preserving that system from its inherent tendency toward instability and chaos. Many on the right, despite the kind of history that Powe and others have provided, cling to the hope that federal judges can be made to return to the more conventionally legalistic task of restraining majorities when necessary in order to enforce permanent constitutional principles.

The current unwillingness to think seriously about the Court's role has important institutional ramifications. With a few exceptions, notably Congress's unavailing effort in the Military Commissions Act of 2006 to restrict the judiciary's control over captured enemy combatants, the political branches are reluctant to challenge federal judicial power. Over and over again during the modern era—whether the issue was the Court's attacks on religious observances in public schools, or its campaign to achieve racial balance in those schools through forced busing, or its invalidation of flag-desecration statutes—efforts to check the Court have fallen short in Congress. More fundamentally, as George W. Bush demonstrated when he signed the Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act hoping that the Court would declare it inconsistent with the free-speech clause, political dependency on the Court's interpretative authority is deep and destructive.

Powe's history demonstrates how large a change this complacency is in American political practice. He recounts many well-known examples of political resistance to judicial power: Before

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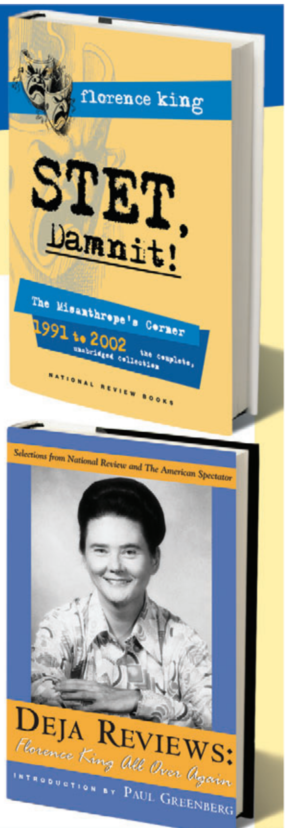
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INTRODUCTION BY PAUL GREENBERG

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Marbury v. *Madison*, a Jeffersonian Congress canceled a term of the Federalist-dominated Court in order to forestall its anticipated power grabs. Pres. Andrew Jackson decided for himself about the constitutionality of a nationally chartered bank even after the Court's pronouncements on that issue. Lincoln challenged the *Dred Scott* decision. Both Congress and Pres. Franklin Roosevelt resisted judicial invalidation of New Deal legislation; less well known is the fact that Roosevelt's attorney general, Francis Biddle, expressed concern to several members of the Court that if they were to declare unconstitutional the military tribunals set up to try German saboteurs, the president would execute the Germans anyway.

Powe's history shows that this resistance to judicial power was not confined to a few major events dominated by a few outsized political figures. Through much of American history, political checks on the Court were pervasive enough and effective enough to suggest that public attitudes toward judicial power were ruggedly independent, even defiant. In 1812, for instance, the Court held that land that had been tax-exempt when owned by an Indian tribe remained tax-exempt after being sold. New Jersey continued to tax the land anyway. Decades later, the Court held that it lacked jurisdiction to decide whether paper money was constitutional out of fear that New York politicians would ignore a declaration of unconstitutionality. In the 20th century, massive resistance to school desegregation in the South included both violent protests and a serious intellectual critique. The Court's 1962 decision outlawing prayer in public schools was for many years widely ignored by school districts across the South and Midwest.

Professor Powe might cast his calm, if sardonic, gaze on each of these instances and rightly observe that some were unfortunate or even ugly, and that, in any event, most ended with the Court eventually enforcing the choices of dominant political coalitions. That response would only highlight the unfortunate fact that historically Americans thought about the role of the Supreme Court harder—and with a greater sense of urgency—than many do today. **NR**

Finding Mum and Pup

NEAL B. FREEMAN

Losing Mum and Pup
a memoir
Christopher Buckley

Losing Mum and Pup: A Memoir,
by Christopher Buckley
(Twelve, 251 pp., $24.99)

If you have read the *New York Times* excerpt from Christopher Buckley's new book, you must read the book itself. Context is not always everything, but in this case it most certainly is. The *Times* excerpt catalogues parental sins committed against Christopher by Bill and Pat Buckley, and thus misleads readers by misrepresenting the underlying document.

Christopher has written an honest book, and there are those who will say that the last thing we need on this subject is an honest book. WFB's memory is golden, a statue glistening in the sun, intimidating even the pigeons who circle at a respectful distance. Why not just declare the Buckley legacy a no-fly zone and be done with it? Easy for you to say, gentle reader. Not so easy, apparently, for Christopher Buckley, the only child of William Frank and Patricia Taylor Buckley. Not so easy, either, for their devoted fans, I'm learning. There are those who will say angry things about this book to Bill's friends, who are assumed by the act of friendship to have taken up NoDoz sentinel duty on the parapets of his reputation. (And yes, it's incontestably true that, had these WFB-PTB stories been spun by a political opponent, we Friends of Bill would have fallen on the poor bastard with an assault evoking shock and awe.) But here we are, confronted with the revelation from an unimpeachable source that both Bill and Pat were on more than a few occasions (to use Christopher's word) . . . impossible.

I don't know about you, but that revelation hits me with the impact of a Nerf ball hurled by a three-year-old. Take the most widely quoted instance of Bill's allegedly abusive behavior, the time he walked out on Christopher's college graduation ceremony. That classic "Bill being Bill" moment hurt Christopher, and it will hurt you as he relives it. It's inexcusable. But it was not, alas, without either prequel or sequel. It was agreed by all who knew him that Bill Buckley was the world's most impatient man. And it was acknowledged almost as widely that, if you're going to write 50-some books and 5,000-some columns, edit a fortnightly magazine, host your own television show longer than Johnny Carson, build a political organization, and then use it to change the nation and the world, then it follows as Monday does Sunday that you're not going to sit through many canned speeches. That's the way the croissant crumbles and Christopher, in context, makes clear that he has come to appreciate The Man in full.

Then there's the "chic, stunning Pat Buckley," she of the three first names, a stylistic tic first observed by media historians in the primo Evans & Novak leaker, "tough, shrewd Mel Laird." Pat was tall, dark, and gorgeous, salty of tongue, sharp of wit, and—at least on those memorable *occasions*—a bit short on the warmth and fuzz. I had a crush on her for years and she did me the kindness of flirting back. She was, in the full Bette Midler sense of the term, a piece of work, and utterly entertaining. But an evening with Pat Buckley was not all rum punch on a sandy beach. In the House of PTB, if you listened closely, you could usually hear a lit fuse hissing somewhere. I recall an *occasion*. Over the years I had reviewed in one publication or another many of Bill's books, maybe 20 or so. Without exception, these reviews were rendered in the ecstatic mode: hyperventilationary variations of "I laughed. I cried. It changed my life." One of those many books disappointed me for some reason, however, and, as I had committed to review it for a California newspaper, I

Mr. Freeman was the first producer of Firing Line, *managed the Buckley for Mayor campaign in New York City, syndicated WFB's newspaper column for many years, and served three different tours as an NR columnist.*

said so in print, thoughtlessly dropping the word "trivial" along the way. Well, you would have thought that I had rented a billboard across the street from Zee Maisonette and painted the offending word in six-foot-high block letters. Two days after the review appeared—two days—Pat plowed through a passel of dinner guests and growled at me, "Trivial! Is that what you think of Bill's work—trivial?" Then, to the undisguised delight of the transfixed dinner guests, Pat proceeded to, as they say in the urological literature, rip me a new one. It was a magnificent turn, played in dudgeon higher than high, quite the best performance art this reviewer had seen in many seasons. After which I picked myself up, stuffed what remained of my dignity in a back pocket, and went home, still nursing a crush on the Canadian Firecracker.

The problem for Christopher, of course, was that he was already home. He had to stay for breakfast, and the mortification he experienced on various *occasions* did not always dissipate overnight. I remember my first impression of him. Bill would bring him along on the campaign trail, asking me to "show Christo the ropes" (which I translated from the Billspeak as "Don't lose track of the kid because I'm never returning to this nether region of Queens you somehow sneaked onto the schedule"). Christopher was 13 then, a sweet young man, fun and precociously observant but something of a nervous wreck, the result, perhaps, of being airmailed repeatedly from home to home, parent to parent. I wondered at the time how—or even whether—he would be able to find his way in life, billeted as he was with two people who routinely sucked up more than their share of the available oxygen.

Not to worry. In this small, well-formed, keenly observed book, Christopher Buckley makes it all the way home both as a writer and as a man. This is expository writing of the first rank, as finely crafted as anything WFB ever produced. It's no more than surmise on my part, but I've long thought that Christopher took up the comic novel as a way to avoid invading his father's airspace; that he sought shelter in the explicit distinction that Christo did his thing, Pup did his, with never the twain to meet. What we see in this book is that Christo can do Pup's thing, too, and as readers we can only hope that he will do more of it in the years ahead. He's good, very good. And as for those *occasions*? Well, what the *Times* didn't tell you is that Christopher deals with them one by one, wrestles them into context, and walks away proud and privileged to have been the son of two loving parents. Not perfect people, to be sure, and manifestly not people gifted in the parental arts, but, in their son's loving estimate, extraordinary people who richly blessed his life by sharing theirs.

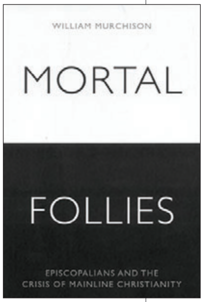
By my count, only one *occasion* remains unresolved. When Christopher publishes his novel *Boomsday*, Bill brushes it off with an e-mailed postscript: "This one didn't work for me. Sorry." That stung and Christopher admits as much, at least twice. Writing a book is sweat-stained work (for everybody but Bill, that is, who wrote them faster than anybody could read them) and Christopher was looking for something . . . more. Believe me, we've felt his pain. Everybody who got close to Bill knew that, while he was generous quite literally to a fault, when it came to writing, he wouldn't give an inch—not on quality, not on style, and, *oy*, not on vocabulary. It was Bill's conceit that if you couldn't write you couldn't think and if you couldn't think you were unlikely to prosper in his friendship. I still have somewhere the first editorial I ever wrote for NR. Only a few of the typewritten words peek through the blaze of red-ink emendations scratched over the yellow foolscap. Every young writer whose copy fell under Bill's jackhammer ballpoint can tell a similar tale. We NR alums, we know sting. What's remarkable about Christopher's literary career, then, is that his other 13 books *did* work for Bill. That was the judgment not of a loving father but of the finest editor of his generation. The ultimate praise.

Now Christo, about that Obama thing . . . **NR**

Christo can do Pup's thing, too, and as readers we can only hope that he will do more of it in the years ahead.

Shelf Life

The problems of mainline Protestantism in our time—the collapse of what used to be called "the Protestant Establishment"—can make for depressing reading, so it helps that prominent journalist William Murchison has a sprightly prose style. In his new book, ***Mortal Follies: Episcopalians and the Crisis of Mainline Christianity*** (Encounter, 215 pp., $25.95), Murchison tells the story of how, in seeking to adapt to the times, the Episcopal Church has rendered itself less relevant to the actual spiritual struggles of the men and women in its pews. In today's Episcopalianism, he writes, "there is a seemingly unstoppable momentum to ratify the culture's choices—the whole range of them, centered on the plenary power of humans to ordain and dispense and control and rearrange."



In the abstract, this may leave open the possibility of an ecclesiastical endorsement of a libertarian utopia—but in practice it robs the culture of an important witness to the deeper truth about man: that he is broken and fallible, and in need of God's grace as much as of political liberty. There is more than enough political activism in our society; with his characteristic eloquence, Murchison makes the case that the Episcopal and other mainline churches would do America a great service by returning their attention to the distinctives of the Christian faith.

—MICHAEL POTEMRA

Film

Waste Watching

ROSS DOUTHAT

THERE are very few directors in Hollywood—below the Steven Spielberg league, that is—who can make absolutely any film they want. Consider Ron Howard and Steven Soderbergh, for instance, both wildly successful moviemakers by any standard. The two have taken different paths to fame and fortune—Howard as an insider's insider, a child actor turned studio go-to guy; Soderbergh as an indie-movie pioneer—but they've ended up in similar places, alternating between big-budget popcorn movies and less commercial projects, with the former's box-office grosses making the latter possible.

Sasha Grey in The Girlfriend Experience

MAGNOLIA PICTURES

Allowing for such constraints, though, both Howard and Soderbergh have about as much artistic freedom as anyone working in a big-budget, high-risk industry can reasonably expect. They own their films—blockbusters and prestige projects alike—in a way that few directors can ever hope to do. Which makes it fair, I think, to look at their most recent efforts and wonder, *What is possessing them to make these movies?*

This month, Howard is doing the blockbuster thing with *Angels and Demons*, the sequel to his 2006 adaptation of Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code*. Soderbergh, meanwhile, is releasing his latest low-budget effort, *The Girlfriend Experience*, a minimalist affair set in New York City during the financial crisis. One will make a bazillion dollars; the other will show up late at night on the Independent Film Channel. And they're both almost entirely lousy.

Presumably Howard did *Angels and Demons* for the money. (Presumably Tom Hanks, back for another go-round as Robert Langdon, the "symbologist" hero of *The Da Vinci Code*, did the same: His sour, smug performance suggests a man killing time till he cashes his next paycheck.) But at some point, surely, the millions piled atop the millions aren't worth pouring your time into making Brown's talky, turgid thrillers come to something approximating life.

Angels is actually marginally better than the deservedly panned *Code*: There are fewer lectures and more movement, as Langdon & Co. race through Rome trying to foil a plot to blow up a papal conclave, and the anti-Catholicism isn't slathered on quite as thick. (The screenplay lops away some of Brown's more lurid digressions—the pope fathering a child on a nun by artificial insemination, and so forth.) But the modest improvements only heighten the uselessness of having talented people involved not once, but twice, with this money-minting but misbegotten franchise. After all, Brown's philippics against institutional religion and, more to the point, his evangelizing on behalf of pantheism, syncretism, and so forth are crucial to the books' success. Toning down the propagandizing produces a slightly less irritating movie, but a much more pointless one.

Howard is no auteur; his best films, from *Parenthood* to *Apollo 13*, are squarely middlebrow, and his worst ones are glossy, predictable Oscar-bait. (Think of *A Beautiful Mind*—or better, don't.) But even his failures usually seem like good-faith attempts to make good movies. Not so this one.

The Girlfriend Experience is tripe of a different sort. The original idea isn't a bad one: Soderbergh's film follows a high-priced Manhattan escort who moves from client to client during last autumn's financial *dégringolade*. Sex, money, power, ruin—from such ingredients great movies can be made.

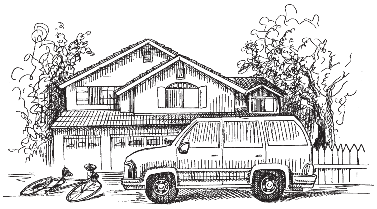
Instead we get a gimmick, and a void. Soderbergh has cast Sasha Grey, an up-and-coming porn star given to spouting off about existentialism between orgies, as the intimacy-peddling prostitute, and she delivers exactly the kind of vacant, attitudinizing performance you'd expect that kind of stunt casting to produce. The emptiness at the heart of the movie is matched by the emptiness at the extremities, where a dull supporting cast improvises its way through an underdeveloped script. Between last year's *Che* and this, Soderbergh has managed a rare twofer: He's made both guerrilla warfare and prostitution deadly dull to watch.

I suppose you could claim the deadness is the point: Through Grey's call girl, her personal-trainer boyfriend (get it? he's selling his body to clients too!), and the various market-watching Masters of the Universe who line up for their services, we're getting a portrait of a society that's sold its soul and lost its personality along the way. But that's just excuse-making. The vacancy—intellectual, moral, personal—isn't an artistic statement; it's just an artistic failure.

And as with *Angels and Demons*, it's a failure of conception, rather than of execution. Even the finest director can have a misfire now and then. But "misfire" implies that the film in question had a chance of firing right—and it's hard to imagine a world in which either Howard's thriller or Soderbergh's porn-inflected little mood piece turned out as anything save dross. Both are bad ideas in theory as well as in practice; both seem like projects that a good director shouldn't even consider touching. And their very existence should reduce our estimation of the men responsible for them. **NR**

The Straggler

Office Romance



JOHN DERBYSHIRE

THE question going round the dinner table was: Do you have any secret pleasures of a mentionable kind? The subsequent confessions displayed various degrees of weirdness: the lady who sings show tunes in her car, the middle-aged man who climbs trees when no one is looking, the book-sniffer. (Some people go to bookstores to buy books; others, apparently, just want to *smell* them.) When my turn came, I knew this was a heaven-sent opportunity to unbosom myself of my own secret passion.

"Stationery," I declared.

An odd sort of silence fell. Then the tree-climber ventured: "With an 'e,' right?"

That's right, stationery with an "e." (The difference was immortalized, at least in England, on one of those vulgar comic postcards George Orwell wrote a famous essay about. A gorgeous female store assistant is being addressed by a callow-looking young man. He: "Excuse me, Miss, do you keep stationery?" She: "Well, sometimes I wriggle a bit.") Stationery! I love the stuff. Paper, pens, notepads, folders, envelopes, markers, erasers, staples, push pins, paper clips, bulldog clips, poster board, display board, foam board, desk furniture . . . A stationery store is to me—what? Aladdin's cave? Pah! What did Aladdin know? You can't do anything with a mess of rubies.

The Staples chain of home-office suppliers has an outlet a couple of miles away. It needs an effort of will for me to drive straight past the place without pulling in. The store layout is uninspired, but what a variety of items to peer at, fondle, or puzzle over! For my mellower moods there is an "independent" in the village, within walking distance. Their prices are a tad higher than the chain store's, but the arrangements are less utilitarian, and for some items the independent is the only place. They have high-quality letter paper in every conceivable thickness, tint, and degree of smoothness. Watermarked? Yes! The only thing missing from those particular shelves, I find myself thinking, is a sign saying: EXCLUSIVE, FOR THE CARRIAGE TRADE.

People don't realize how much ancient lore is hidden here in the stationery-store aisles. For example: No true stationery buff would speak of the "thickness" of paper, as I just did, unless condescending to an audience of the unenlightened, as I just was. It's always "weight." Then you have the quantification tables. How many sheets in a quire? Quires in a ream? Reams in a bale? There are actually *three different* systems. What do they know of paper, who only paper know? Long, long ago—it was 1976, I think—my employer sent me on a course to learn about "the paperless office." Ha! Immanentize the eschaton, would you? Today, a third of a century on, one whole zone of Staples is filled with crates and boxes of paper. See hubris brought low!

When the paper is printed up with lines on it, you enter a separate realm of wonder, an annex to the cave of delights. One of my earliest adventures in papyrophilia (papyrasty?) occurred in my early teens. I discovered, from a book a kind teacher lent me, that a point on the mathematical plane may be defined not only by humdrum x and y according to the Cartesian scheme, but also by r (straight-line distance from a given point) and *theta* (the angle separating the two points from a given line). I at once wanted to know whether there was some *r-theta* graph paper, equivalent to ordinary square-ruled *x-y* graph paper. Diligent enquiries around my small English country town turned up a business-products supplier who did indeed stock "polar" graph paper, heaven only knows why. I spent a week's allowance on a pad of the stuff, and lost myself for hours plotting cardioids, lemniscates, and equiangular spirals. *And* that same store stocked logarithmic graph paper, too—both log-linear and log-log!

There were at that time no real stationery stores for the ordinary consumer. Mum and Dad bought writing paper from the store that delivered their newspapers and sold candy and cigarettes. Anything more elaborate, like the drawing instruments required for school geometry, came from a bookstore, or from the five-and-dime. Businesspeople had specialty suppliers working out of cluttered back-street lofts, like my graph-paper guys.

It was the rise of the home office in the 1980s that brought the joys of promiscuous stationery-buying to a mass public. Ryman's was the first British chain—still in business, the Internet tells me. Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive!—to roam untrammeled between racks of ring binders and loose-leaf folders, Scotch tape and glue sticks, pausing now and then to caress a particularly well-formed desk-lamp, or to part with trembling fingers the soft pink folds of "specialty" note-paper. What the 1960s were for the rest of Western humanity, the 1980s were for us stationery hounds—liberation!

It turned a bit sour, of course, as those things always do. With retail commercialization came uniformity and some loss of mystery. Staples does not stock polar graph paper—nor even the older, bolder style of air-mail envelopes, with blue and red flashes around the edges. The personal computer seems to have put the kibosh on templates, too—those plastic sheets you could lay on a page and trace shapes through. I have one here from my programming days, trademarked—yes!—the IBM Corporation, with cutouts of all the common flowcharting symbols (don't ask). I have geographical templates, too—one for Great Britain, and another for Europe. What do they avail me, in this gloom of exile?

To Staples, then, to cheer myself up. As always, I linger longest at the "notions" shelves, looking at those things I don't really need but might just buy anyway: optimizers and organizers—their very names suggesting they will do the work for you!—and letter trays and sorting racks, penholders and bookends, gizmos for cutting paper precisely or extracting unwanted staples. Hole-punches are, alas, a closed book. I bought one last year, a magnificent vertical model with a mighty handle, that will punch through thirty sheets at a time. My kids, who use it far more than I do, call it The Beast. My hole-punching needs are satisfied for a while. I do rather like the look of those rotating desk organizers, though . . . **NR**

Happy Warrior

BY MARK STEYN

Raw Deal

Well, the Speaker has resigned. No, not Nancy Pelosi, but Michael Martin, Speaker of the House of Commons at Westminster. It's seven-and-a-half centuries since Sir Peter de Montfort served as "parlour" of the "Mad Parliament," and any office that's been around that long is bound to have attracted its share of dodgy characters. Yet Mr. Martin is the first Speaker to be forced from office since Sir John Trevor got the boot in 1695 after accepting a bribe of 1,000 guineas.

A thousand guineas? Ha! What a nickel-and-dime (or penny-and-farthing) loser. Mr. Martin presided over a system that eliminated the need for bribes by allowing members of Parliament to expense just about everything they could conceivably need—and a few things they didn't: You're supposed to claim only for items you use yourself, but Phil Woolas, Britain's immigration minister, managed to get reimbursed for a purchase of ladies' clothing and tampons. Perhaps he has some kind of novelty juggling act with which he amuses visiting dignitaries.

Those members less imaginative than Mr. Woolas clean up by "flipping" (as it's called) their primary and secondary residences, and letting the taxpayer pay the upkeep of the more expensive. You don't even have to own two properties to get the state to pay for the "second": The home secretary, Jacqui Smith, designates her sister's home in London as her primary residence and gets reimbursed for costs on her "second" and only home back in Worcestershire. The Viscount Hailsham, as his moniker might suggest, has distinctive property-maintenance needs: He was reimbursed £2,115 for the dredging of his moat.

> A lifetime in 'public service' is a lifetime of getting serviced at public expense.

Well, before thou cast out the moat of thy brother's eye, eye up the moat of thine own. So let's be bipartisan. At the House of Commons, everyone's on the take: old socialist class warriors, New Labour Blairite slickers, squishy Tory wets of no fixed principle, right-wing hardliners. John Prescott, former deputy prime minister, claimed £112.52 for repairs to his toilet seat. Sian James was reimbursed 59 pence for a chocolate Santa, and Andrew Rosindell £1.31 for an order of jellied eels. Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams and four of his fellow Irish republican members refuse to take their seats in the House because they decline to take their oath of allegiance to a queen they don't recognize. Nevertheless, they've managed to claim over half a million pounds in expenses. Isn't that the perfect job? You never have to show up, but they'll still process your expense claims.

And at least Gerry Adams & Co. have as their stated aim the destruction of the United Kingdom in its present form. What's the excuse of the Tories, Liberals, and socialists?

For their constituents, the scandal is a rare glimpse of a central truth about politics in an advanced Western democracy: A lifetime in "public service" is a lifetime of getting serviced at public expense. The salaries are small but the perks are unlimited. A few weeks back, while the home secretary was away, her poor husband whiled away an evening by purchasing two pay-per-view pornographic movies—*By Special Request* and *Raw Meat 3*—which, upon her return, his missus promptly billed to the government. Most of us, whether we land a job at the local feed store, the dental practice, or National Review, expect to have to pay for our own moats, toilet seats, chocolate Santas, and screenings of *Raw Meat 3*. But being in "public service" means never having to say, "Hey, this one's on me."

There are local variations, of course. In the U.S., I don't believe you can claim for repairs to the toilet seat at your second home, but then again your second home might have come your way, like Chris Dodd's Irish "cottage," at an exceptionally favorable price. A senator gets between $2.3 million and $3.7 million for the costs of running his office. Tom Daschle's plea in mitigation for his tax irregularities can stand for an entire political culture: It never occurred to him, suddenly returned to private life and working his Rolodex for a little light consulting and speechifying, that things like chauffeurs and limousines were taxable benefits members of the non-legislating class are supposed to declare to the Treasury. After all, in Congress, that stuff is just the way it is: Declaring your driver would be as silly as declaring the air or the grass.

Do you remember the anthrax scare just after 9/11? I remember how shocked I was when I heard on the radio that 34 of Senator Daschle's staffers had come down with anthrax poisoning. Not shocked that they'd been poisoned, but shocked that Senator Daschle had 34 staffers. Why?

You can say, Well, it's all a lot more complicated than it was in the 18th century. But isn't that one of those chicken-and-egg deals? Do legislators now require unlimited operating expenses because government has become so huge and complex? Or has government become so huge and complex because legislators have unlimited operating expenses? Or to put it another way: When a "citizen-legislator" gets an office budget of $3.7 million, is it likely you'll get small government?

The British public is said to be mad as hell and threatening to run as independent candidates up and down the land, which, in a parliamentary system, could wreak real havoc. We'll see whether they learn the real lesson—that a permanent, professional, career legislative class is no friend to democracy. In a healthy polity, our representatives should be part-time, poorly remunerated, perk-free, and pay for their own porn. **NR**

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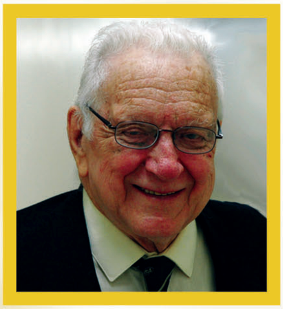

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